Political Context and Attitude Change

Michael MacKuen; Courtney Brown

POLITICAL CONTEXT AND ATTITUDE CHANGE

MICHAEL MacKUEN
University of Missouri
St. Louis

COURTNEY BROWN
Emory University

Political context has an important impact on individual attitude change. This is an analysis of the dynamic effects of contextual variables. Drawing on data taken from the American National Election Study (ANES) panel study, we demonstrate that the environment shapes the way the citizen views politics. While varying in degree, the results hold for a broad (county-level) and a narrow (residential neighborhood-level) definition of the relevant context. The patterns involved suggest that citizens' evaluations of candidates and parties are most directly influenced by what their neighbors are saying at the moment, that is to say, the content of current discussion. In contrast, citizens' self-identification evinces sensitivity to the more stable partisan character of the environment. The results indicate that the impact of social influence is crucially dependent on the nature of contemporary political debate and that the social setting serves as an intervening mechanism in the broader communication system and not merely as an exogenous source for political information.

Citizens form opinions about politics by evaluating information that is filtered through the social environment in which they live. This filtering process biases the information to accord with standards held by friends and neighbors. Consequently, opinion formation is a social as well as a psychic phenomenon.

This intuitively appealing statement must be taken as a proposition. While much research supports this fundamental view, the overall pattern is far from compelling. Yet, the idea of social influence rubs the touchstone of politics; it centers on the relationship between the individual and the collectivity. At issue here is whether political attitudes are formed in an essentially atomistic way or whether they depend crucially on citizens' interactions with friends and neighbors. On one theoretical level, the question involves the root of public opinion. On another theoretical level, it gauges the individual as an elementary actor in politics. Is it sufficient to think of the citizen as an individual acting in a collective environment, or must one take into account the citizen's being defined by that environment as well? The matter deserves attention.

We assess the role that social context plays in shaping political views. Using multiple definitions of context and a panel survey taken during the 1980 presidential campaign, we are able to (1) identify social influence on attitude *change*, (2) compare its power with that of psychological factors, (3) explore subtleties in the influence process, and (4) extend our understanding of the link between the immediate social milieu and the broader political environment.

Background

The notion that one's social environment affects individual attitude formation and resultant political behavior has been tentatively accepted at least since Tingsten's early work (1937). While it is plausible that the associations between individual views and those dominant in the local political context might be generated by other phenomena, the scientific community's primary interest in contextual effects stems from their serving as evidence for interpersonal influence (Sprague 1982).[1] Empirical studies of contextual effects suggest that individual behavior and opinion formation are partly a function of the social environment. Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee's (1954) classic work on voting is different from most other studies because it utilizes longitudinal data. Their analysis reveals a bias in opinion change toward community norms. The most important subsequent evaluations of the basic hypothesis have relied on cross-sectional data. Warren Miller's (1956) seminal work, using data from the 1952 Survey Research Center national election study and county-level measures of political context, demonstrates that the political environment affects individual vote intentions independently of individual partisan identification. Further probing the same national election study, Putnam (1966) finds that social interaction, as structured by group membership, is a principal agent in the transmission of community norms. Brown's (1981, 1987) analysis of individual life histories yields additional evidence that individual political attitudes are affected by the political character of the environment. Weatherford's (1982) work on the neighborhood's influence on political attitudes reconfirms the contextual effect for microenvironments. In addition, comparative analyses further indicate a social influence process. The important works by Butler and Stokes (1969, 144–50) and Miller (1977) utilizing British data and by Langton and Rapoport (1975) studying urban workers in Chile are primary examples. Yet, while the lay of the land supports the social influence hypothesis, the typically modest observable effects do not always exceed standard statistical noise (for an explicit test—and a caution—see Bodman 1983). Further, because so much of the evidence comes from cross-sectional rather than longitudinal observation, a number of alternative hypotheses cannot be eliminated (Prysby 1976). In this article we shall present evidence from a dynamic perspective that fills out the picture.

The mechanisms through which social influence is felt have been variously portrayed. In the classic two-step model (Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955), opinion leaders carry messages to the less-involved. However, Robinson's (1976) important empirical analysis of political influence suggests that such one-way influence is rare and that instead the typical form of social interaction is the discussion group, each member of which carries ideas to others. Yet little is known about how such mutual social influence operates. First, it may be that individuals adjust their fundamental views in accord with the established political norms in their local environment and that any subsequent biases in opinion formation merely reflect this long-term conceptual frame of reference. Second, interpersonal influence may depend not on long-term conditions but instead on what we shall call *hot communication*—that is, the content of currently ongoing conversations, whether they reflect stable political biases or not. This hot communication may operate in two ways. On the one hand, it may reflect the tendency of members in the social environment to offer views consistent with their own beliefs and thus may shape, more or less continuously, the information that any member of the group encounters (for a careful and rich

exposition, see Huckfeldt 1983a). On the other hand, McPhee (McPhee 1963; McPhee and Smith 1962) suggests a more subtle and indirect process based on social-reality testing, in which an individual takes information from external sources (most notably the mass media), forms a personal understanding, and then places it before peers for confirmation. When the understanding passes muster, the individual is on the way to a firmer attitude; when it fails, the individual seeks further outside information and repeats the test. Other things being equal, the net result is pressure to conform with collectively held views. In this model, the social context acts not as a source of political information but instead as an intervening agent.

Most of the evidence that supports the idea of social influence is essentially cross-sectional. Yet, if individuals are subject to others' influence, then the process ought to leave a trace in cross-temporal data. Further, the possible mechanisms of social influence will leave characteristic time traces, and longitudinal data will evaluate the different models. We shall examine a set of data on opinion *change* in order (1) to assess the empirical evidence for social influence and (2) to refine further our understanding of the mechanisms involved in political persuasion.

The Data and Analytic Strategy

We investigate contextual influence on political attitudes by studying the dynamic impact of the social environment, defined in two different ways, on change in citizen attitudes both toward major presidential candidates and toward political parties. We analyze data taken from the 1980 ANES panel study in which individual-level measures of political orientations, feelings, and loyalties were elicited from a national sample in three waves: January, June, and September of 1980.[2] Thus the intervals between mea-
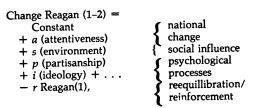
surements include, first, the entire primary campaign—fiercely contested in both parties—and, second, the fall mobilization spurred by the national conventions and the early stages of the campaign.

We employ two definitions of context. The first, the macroenvironment, is measured by the long-term political orientation of the respondent's country (here the average proportion Republican or Democratic vote 1972–80). The second, the microenvironment, taps the local neighborhood. We rely on the respondent's self-report of perceptions of specific neighbors' partisan loyalties and vote intentions. These two definitions are conceptually distinct, the first encompassing a broader range of "local" phenomena while the second focuses on a specific set of conversational partners. In addition, by our using the pair we shall be able to avoid some dangers inherent in each one separately. The county-level data clearly do not represent anyone's local discussion context with any precision, and the bluntness of the measure does not permit subtle analyses. The self-report of neighbors' views is subject to respondents' manufacturing data to accord with their own views and does not represent relevant social contexts at the work place or elsewhere outside the immediate residential neighborhood. A consideration of these two measures of context and an analysis of their impact on attitude change will go a long way toward evaluating the magnitude and mechanisms of social influence.

Change is our tool to examine causality. If the social environment affects attitude formation, then the process should leave an empirical trace in sequenced observations on individual views. Let us say that we wish to model the change in an individual's evaluation of Ronald Reagan. Here we use a response to a thermometer rating as a measure of the respondent's opinion at two times (say January and June, or $t1$ and $t2$). The

change in opinion, then, may be calculated as the difference between feelings toward Reagan as observed in January and June.

The straightforward analysis tests the proposition that such observable change may be a function of each respondent's social environment. The expectation is that individuals will align their views with those dominant in their political milieu. However, we wish to examine this empirical link while also taking into account a much more individualistic model of attitude change. Our model includes three substantive components. First, we consider the national movement toward or against the particular candidate. Such a factor is represented in the constant term of an estimation equation (and further refined by including a measure of the respondent's attentiveness to the campaign). In addition, ordinary information-processing theory suggests that individuals will be receptive to political information consistent with their own fundamental political attitudes and interests. For example, a conservative Republican will be expected to alter his or her evaluation more positively toward Reagan than will a liberal Democrat. For this reason, we include in our estimation models such factors as the individual's partisanship, ideology, race, income, education, sex, and age to represent relatively robust attitudes and political interests. Finally, attitude change should reflect previous attitudes toward Reagan. On the one hand, supporters should be biased toward positive information and opponents toward negative information; call this reinforcement. On the other hand, ordinary re-equilibration mechanisms (often seen as regression toward the mean) should have the opposite effect. While these last two biases cannot be separated out in our data, their net effect must be considered and the respondent's previous attitude will be included in the model of attitude change. The estimation equations will take the form

$$
\begin{aligned}
\text{Change Reagan (1–2)} =&\\
\text{Constant}& \qquad \left.\begin{array}{l}\text{national}\\ \text{change}\end{array}\right\}\\
+\ a\ \text{(attentiveness)}&\\
+\ s\ \text{(environment)}& \quad \}\ \text{social influence}\\
+\ p\ \text{(partisanship)}& \qquad \left.\begin{array}{l}\text{psychological}\\ \text{processes}\end{array}\right\}\\
+\ i\ \text{(ideology)} + \dots&\\
-\ r\ \text{Reagan(1)},& \qquad \left.\begin{array}{l}\text{reequillibration/}\\ \text{reinforcement}\end{array}\right\}
\end{aligned}
$$

where the thermometer ratings of Reagan are given time indexes; the social environment is measured by the political complexion of the individual's county or neighborhood; the psychological component is represented by partisanship, ideology, and so on; and the reequilibration/reinforcement mechanism is marked by the *previous* attitude toward Reagan.[3] Of particular interest will be the visibility of the contextual impact against a background of statistical noise and the relative importance of the environmental as compared to the psychological factors. In the first appendix we show that this disarming estimation equation represents a modestly sophisticated dynamic model of attitude change.

The Macroenvironment: The County

We consider first the political complexion of the individual's county of residence. Of course, for many locations the county is a very rough approximation of the political environment—it may include a variety of subcultures whose effects are cancelled in an overall measure, and the composite measure may mask the genuine effects of social influence. Nevertheless, the county does present an indirect measure of social context in the sense that the probability of encountering different partisan arguments depends on the nature of the general environment (classically, the "breakage" effect of Berelson et al. 1954; for some empirical evidence, see Huckfeldt 1983b). Further, county-level

measures of political character are readily available and represent the baseline of contextual research for much of the discipline. Our using this macrodefinition allows us to examine the oft-reported cross-sectional result from our longitudinal perspective, and it also serves as a bridge to individually specific definitions of the neighborhood.

We address two questions: (1) What are the magnitudes of the contextual effects occurring over time? (2) During which period of the campaign year are the contextual effects more pronounced? We begin to address the former by examining a fully specified model containing a straightforward contextual measure.

The Magnitude of Contextual Effects

In Table 1 we present the estimates for a model in which the dependent variable is the change in the feeling thermometer for Reagan between January and September. There are 10 independent variables included in the model in order to represent the effects of both social and individualistic information-processing mechanisms. Note that there are no significance problems with the coefficient for the contextual term (Republican context), the proportion of the local Republican presidential vote as averaged since 1972. There are six variables whose coefficients are statistically discernable from zero in this

Table 1. Change in Feelings for Reagan, January to September
Full Model Specification: County Context

Variable	Parameter Estimate	Probability > T	Standardized Estimate
Straight Impact of Context			
Intercept	15.11	.13	
January feeling	− .57	.00	−.58
Republican context	20.58	.03	.07
Sex	−2.90	.09	−.06
Race	−3.77	.25	−.04
Education	− .61	.09	−.06
Income	.19	.24	.04
Partisanship	2.87	.00	.24
Age	.10	.07	.07
Ideology	1.22	.13	.06
Information	.07	.59	.02
R^2 = .30; Adj. R^2 = .29			
Impact of Context in Interaction with Previous Feeling			
Intercept	26.17	.00	
January feeling	− .73	.00	−.75
Republican context in interaction	.31	.05	.19
Sex	−2.84	.09	−.06
Race	−4.16	.20	−.05
Education	− .60	.10	−.06
Income	.19	.26	.04
Partisanship	2.86	.00	.24
Age	.10	.07	.07
Ideology	1.22	.13	.06
Information	.07	.60	.02
R^2 = .30; Adj. R^2 = .29			

model. Of those six, the contextual measure has the third largest standardized coefficient. Thus, the contextual measure has a greater impact on the *change* in feelings toward Reagan than all other variables except the initial feeling term and the respondent's partisan identification. Put differently, the impact of an individual's milieu on attitude change is greater than the effect of a respondent's sex, age, or education in addition to all those variables whose coefficients did not survive the significance test at all, such as the respondent's race, information level, income, and ideology.

When the contextual measure is specified in interaction with the respondent's lagged (January) feelings, the picture is even more dramatic. In Table 1 we present the estimate for such a model. Theoretical representations of social influence clearly take into account the relative distance between the individual's views and those of the group (see Huckfeldt 1983a and Sprague 1982). While this interactive estimation equation suffers from collinearity between the "interactive contextual" term and the "previous feelings" and thus produces imprecise coefficients, it most nearly reflects a full theoretical expression.[4]

The results presented in the first and second parts of Table 1 are in large part comparable except for the magnitude of the standardized coefficient for the contextual variable. Here, the standardized contextual coefficient approaches the magnitude of the standardized coefficient for partisanship. Although these basic results do not yet address the mechanisms of social influence, they do indicate that the effect of political context on attitude change is both statistically evident and substantively important.

Contextual influence is not limited to Reagan attitudes. We conducted similar analyses of attitude change for the time periods January to June (1–2), June to September (2–3), and January to September (2–3), and January to September (1–3)[5] for evaluations of Reagan, Carter, the Republican party, and the Democratic party. With the exception of feelings toward Carter, the contextual effects are pervasive. In all but one of the regressions, the magnitude of the standardized coefficients for the straight contextual variable ranks at least fourth among all variables. Moreover, using the interactive specification of context instead, the contextual effect never ranks lower than third, surpassed in importance only by the effect of the respondent's partisanship and the previous attitude itself. The dynamics of context are clearly manifest.

The Timing of Context

It is of interest here to ask when the effect of context is greatly felt. Is it during the initial period of the electoral calendar when ideas about the candidates and the parties are just beginning to circulate and judgements of and reactions to candidates are tentative and exploratory? Or is the real impact of context felt during the final stages of the campaign when the heat of the two-way electoral battle is on? The argument for the latter period is that context will have a greater impact when campaign activity is most ferocious. The argument in favor of the earlier period is that environmental influence is greatest when opinions are tentative and that, by the "endgame" of the campaign, the contextual effect will have already been felt. It is also possible that context will bear its imprint during the entire process of the campaign. In this case, the effect of context would be more appropriately read as a continuous process between January and election day.

In Table 2 we present the estimated coefficients for contextual variables, written as a straightforward variable and as an interactive specification (context times the value of the initial feeling thermometer variable). The parameter estimates

Table 2. County Context and Change in Evaluations

Candidates and Parties	Time Interval		
	1–2	2–3	1–3
Reagan			
Straight	19.41*	15.63	20.58*
	(8.28)	(8.44)	(9.49)
Interactive	.27*	.25*	.32*
	(.14)	(.13)	(.16)
Carter			
Straight	-11.10	- 6.62	-11.56
	(8.84)	(7.91)	(9.50)
Interactive	- .16	- .12	- .18
	(.13)	(.13)	(.14)
Republican party			
Straight	5.52	15.79*	10.13
	(7.16)	(6.90)	(7.43)
Interactive	.10	.21*	.19
	(.11)	(.11)	(.12)
Democratic party			
Straight	-12.86	- 8.88	-12.84
	(7.69)	(6.83)	(7.38)
Interactive	- .20	- .16	- .24*
	(.11)	(.11)	(.11)

Note: All estimates are taken from fully specified models of the form shown in Table 1. Only the context coefficients are presented here. Standard errors of the estimators are shown in parentheses.

*Significant at the .05 level.

and their standard errors are included for all possible time periods.

Begin examining Table 2 by looking at the row on feelings for Reagan. To compare time periods, examine the coefficients for periods 1–2 (January to June) and 2–3 (June to September). Note that for both the straight and the interactive versions of the contextual measure, the greater impact of context was felt in the earlier period, that is, during the primary season. A similar tale can be told using change in feelings for Carter and the Democratic party as the dependent variables. The earlier period contains the largest contextual impact. However, the story is complicated somewhat by the results obtained using feelings for the Republican party. Here, the only significant impact of political context is found in the later period.

What does all this mean? Context is complex. Contextual effects vary across individuals as well as parties. Moreover, the effect of context varies with regard to the nature of the political attitude and the character of contemporary political debate. Democrats held the White House and the Congress for all of 1980. It is likely that the political discussion process was more clearly focused on the Democratic rather than the Republican party during the primary season, especially because media attention reflected the Democratic control of the Senate, House, and presidency as well as the ongoing Kennedy-

Carter battle for the heart of the Democratic party itself. However, after the primaries were over, the Republicans and the Democrats were clearly viewed as head-on combatants. When the Republican choice was clear, feelings for the Republican party, as conditioned by each respondent's political environment, began to congeal. Thus, context has its greatest impact when the focus of the campaign is clearest. For the incumbent party and for individual candidates for whom media attention can be focused intensely, the contextual imprint can be found early in the electoral season. However, for the out-of-power party, feelings remain less structured until the electoral season matures and the party's image becomes more distinct.

The complexity of contextual influence is underlined by a puzzle lying in the coefficient pattern of Table 2. Note that the effect of a Democratic county context on feelings toward Carter and the Democratic party shows a negative sign (that is, the more Democratic the context, the greater the negative change in Democratic evaluations). To be sure, these terms are not statistically discernible from zero, but it is unlikely that such a clear pattern was produced by chance. Such a counterintuitive pattern indicates complexity and suggests care in the use of macroenvironmental contextual data. In the second part of the appendix we provide an interpretation of this curiosity.

The Microenvironment: In the Neighborhood

We now examine the effect that an individual's neighbors have on attitude change. By examining the influence of specifically named individuals on the citizen's political views, we shall be able to pursue a more subtle analysis of the mechanisms involved here. First, and by far most important, we shall be able to

test whether the macrocontextual effect (measured by county political complexion) may plausibly be attributed to concrete social interactions. In addition, we shall shed some light on the micromechanism involved by showing that social influence depends not on indirect cues about social norms but instead on the content of actual communication and that the asymmetry of the influence fits nicely with the social-reality test (McPhee and Smith 1962; McPhee 1963) model of social interaction. Finally, we shall illustrate the susceptibility of partisanship itself to social influence.

A wistful tradition sets a high place at the table for the neighborhood to honor it as a guardian of democratic stability. Yet, the image of every citizen's being knit into a neighborhood political fabric just does not describe the life of most contemporary citizens. When asked if there were anyone in the neighborhood with whom the respondent socialized, only a modest majority (66%) ventured a name. Clearly, the myth of the neighborly American exaggerates the extent to which late twentieth century citizens find their friendships near their homes. Of course, given occupational and residential mobility patterns as well as the effects of the automobile revolution, such a result might be expected. More particularly with respect to politics, only about one-third of the sample could both name a neighborhood friend and identify either that neighbor's partisan orientation or current (1980) vote intention. Thus, when we examine social influence in the neighborhood, we must realize that the effect is practically limited to a minority (though a substantial minority) of citizens.

Nevertheless, this subset is of interest. If we can identify a social effect here, we add presumptive evidence for further social effects at the work place or among family or friends outside the immediate neighborhood. Thus, we shall look for social communication phenomena where

Table 3. Neighbors' Partisanship and Change in Evaluations

Change in Evaluation by Time Interval	Neighbors' Partisanship		Own Partisanship
	Republican	Democratic	
Reagan			
1–2	7.4*	2.6	15.3*
2–3	3.0	2.6	11.5*
1–3	8.1*	2.8	16.3*
Republican party			
1–2	–1.7	3.3	19.8*
2–3	5.8*	2.7	9.2*
1–3	4.9*	3.2	14.4*
Carter			
1–2	–3.1	–2.1	9.5*
2–3	–1.8	2.3	10.6*
1–3	–2.6	.7	14.9*
Democratic party			
1–2	–3.8	1.3	19.6*
2–3	.5	3.8*	11.6*
1–3	–2.0	3.3*	15.5*
Anderson			
2–3	1.3	2.8	–3.2

Note: All estimates are taken from fully specified models of the form shown in Table 1. Only selected coefficients are presented here.

*Coefficients significant at .05 level.

they lie in our data and may guess that they exist elsewhere as well.

Identifying Social Influence

First consider partisanship. Our basic argument is that when citizens discuss politics, perhaps at the most casual level, the social environment shapes the substantive content. Our expectation is that citizens, taking cues from their conversational partners, will encounter and more readily accept information consistent with the political character of the environment.

In Table 3 we mobilize the elementary dynamic model to estimate the effect of each citizen's *friends'* partisanship in shaping the citizen's views of the presidential candidates and the parties. The coefficients presented include those for the neighbors' partisanship and the individual's own partisanship. The full estimation equations incorporate, as well, an endoge-

nous lag that captures the reequilibration-reinforcement composite and such intrapsychic guides as the individual's ideology, sex, race, income, and education. Each full equation is similar to that shown in Table 1, although not all coefficients are shown. Each estimation model is represented across the rows. The way to look at this table, however, is down the columns. By analyzing microdata we are able to isolate the impact of talking with specific individuals and thus may examine the differential impact of Republican or Democratic conversational partners in coloring information about both Republican and Democratic candidates and parties. Each coefficient reveals the bias in the citizen's information environment relative to that of other citizens who know nothing of their neighbors' political views.[6] Note, for example, that talking with Republicans clearly affected how the citizen altered his or her views toward

Table 4. Neighbors' Vote Intention and Change in Evaluations

Change in Evaluation by Time Interval	Neighbors' Vote Intention			Own Partisanship
	Reagan	Carter	Anderson	
Reagan				
1–2	9.1*	– .3	–20.6	14.8*
2–3	8.2*	–1.2	–10.8	10.1*
1–3	13.4*	–2.8	–23.1*	15.0*
Republican party				
1–2	0.0	– .1	–4.6	18.8*
2–3	5.8*	1.3	–6.3	8.8*
1–3	5.8*	– .4	–7.9	13.7*
Carter				
1–2	–8.4*	8.1*	–2.4	8.3*
2–3	–5.9*	4.9	– .4	10.1*
1–3	–9.4*	11.1*	– .2	13.7*
Democratic party				
1–2	–4.2	3.6	.3	19.7*
2–3	–5.4*	6.2*	–9.2	11.1*
1–3	–7.9*	7.8*	–7.3	14.9*
Anderson				
2–3	–2.4	–3.3	21.7*	3.2

Note: All estimates are taken from fully specified models of the form shown in Table 1. Only selected coefficients are presented here.

*Coefficients significant at .05 level.

Reagan while talking with Democrats had little effect.

The results present uncertain evidence for social communication bias. A Republican context clearly shapes views toward Reagan and the Republican party; a Democratic circle modestly helps attitudes about the Democratic party; and the discussion context does little to Carter feelings. More generally, the coefficients are fairly small and many are submerged in the background estimation noise. In all, the pattern lacks the crispness one might expect.

This model, however, may miss the underlying process. Friends' partisanship represents a fairly stable background condition of the social environment. It does not tap the dynamic information flow that characterizes active political discussion. Consider, instead, the friendship circle's vote intentions. For the majority

of partners, vote intention is isomorphic with partisanship. However, by considering those cases where friends have deviated from their partisan guides, we shall be able to measure more precisely the political content of the information network. Republican friends revealing a Carter preference and, more importantly, Democratic friends opting for Reagan should speak with different voice than loyal partisans. Indeed, the data suggest that this is the case.

In Table 4 we present the product of a parallel analysis, substituting friends' vote intention for partisanship. The social bias is more potent, takes on the correct sign, and is statistically discernible throughout the set of equations. As a straightforward test of the social interaction hypothesis, these estimates provide firmer support than the occasionally murky estimates based on friends' partisanship.

This basic result is important. While the contextual effect of the macroenvironment (the county's partisan coloration) may be generated by historical tradition or by local media or party organizations that are not part of the social-communication hypothesis, this evidence clearly demonstrates that the context's influence can be attributed directly to social interaction. The general lay of the land for the microenvironment has the same topography as that for the macroenvironment. Despite its apparently commonplace nature, the significance of this result should not be underestimated. The correspondence between the two sets of results suggests that the macroenvironmental results presented above (and so dominant in the scientific literature on context) represent the workings of a genuine social phenomenon.

On Micromechanisms

The microcontextual data permit a finer statement about the nature of the communication process. By looking simultaneously at both friends' partisanship and friends' vote intention, we can produce some empirical leverage that allows us to differentiate between two versions of the contextual hypothesis. The theoretical question is whether the contextual effect is generated by subtle environmental cues that operate in a steady state way or, instead, by the hot communication of current information. Imagine a citizen whose friends are partisan Democrats but, given the politics of the moment, are now leaning toward a Reagan vote. The stable context model suggests that the citizen will have developed a Democratic bias in information processing, a sort of socially based partisanship. The hot communication model posits that, regardless of the stable characteristics, it is the fact that the citizen finds his or her friends talking up Reagan that is important—the citizen will experience a

Republican context. The empirical question is whether it is neighbors' partisanship or neighbors' vote intention that most dramatically generates a bias in the information environment.

In Table 5 we display two representations of the analysis. Observe the *added* explanatory power of neighbors' partisanship, vote intention, and the combination of the two when compared to a baseline model comprised of the intrapsychic components. The numbers represent comparisons of adjusted R-squares in order to take into account varying degrees of freedom. In this representation it is clear that most of the social effect is generated by the neighbors' vote intentions rather than by their partisan loyalties. Once the impact of vote intention is taken into account, partisanship adds practically nothing. Further note that the extra explanatory power of the social environment runs in the range of 2% to 3% over that produced by an individualistic model. This increase is both statistically identifiable and worthy of note.[7]

In the lower half of Table 5 we show the impact of neighbors' partisanship and of neighbors' vote intention (the numbers represent the contrasting effects of full and homogeneous social settings).[8] For example, the difference between having three Republican friends and three Democratic friends had an estimated informational bias of −0.7 points on January–September changes in a Reagan evaluation. The similar effect for having three Reagan supporters as opposed to three Carter supporters in the social circle is 15.9 points.

The overall picture is striking: neighbors' vote intention dominates. Once we know for whom the friends intend to vote, their partisanship is entirely irrelevant. When it comes to shaping information about the candidates or the parties, it is clear that we observe the effects of transitory biases, hot communication, rather than the effects of a socially anchored par-

tisanship. This is, of course, consistent with the social communication rather than the social cues model of social influence. Further, it suggests that attempts to model contextual effects based on long-term characteristics of the environment produce only pale imitations of the real thing. The long-term political history of the county is at best a measure of local partisan patterns. However, these results indicate that it is not the fundamental character of one's social milieu that matters; it is what people think and say at the moment that carries the day.

In addition, the coefficients in Table 5 indicate the strength of social influence. The effects of neighbors' vote intentions are substantial. In fact they compare favorably with the information-shaping power of the individual's self-proclaimed

Table 5. Joint Impact of Neighbors' Partisanship and Vote Intention on Candidate and Party Evaluations

Change in Evaluation by Time Interval	Neighbors' Partisanship	Neighbors' Vote Intention	Both Neighbors' Partisanship and Vote Intention	Own Partisanship
Additional Explanatory Power over Individualistic Model (Percent Adjusted R-square)				
Reagan 1–3	.9	2.5	2.8	
Republican party 1–3	.6	.3	.9	
Carter 1–3	− .1	1.6	1.6	
Democratic party 1–3	.3	2.4	1.9	
Anderson 2–3	− .1	2.1	2.1	
Impact Coefficients in fully Specified Model				
Reagan 1–3	− .7	15.9[a]*		15.8*
Republican party 1–3	.9	5.4[a]		14.4*
Carter 1–3	−4.2	23.4[a]*		14.2*
Democratic party 1–3	− .8	16.7[a]*		14.7*
Anderson 2–3	.3	25.3[ab]*		3.2

Note: All estimates are taken from fully specified models of the form shown in Table 1. Only selected coefficients are presented here.
[a]The contrast is between a Reagan and a Carter environment (leaving Anderson supporters to the side).
[b]This is contrast for Reagan–Anderson friends. The comparable coefficient for Carter–Anderson is 26.4.*
*Coefficients significant at .05 level.

partisanship. This pattern clearly suggests the value of considering social, in addition to individualistic, models of political change.[9]

Finally, the neighbor vote intention data provide a hint about the character of hot communication. Were the social circle an independent source of political information, then we should expect to observe a continuous impact over time. Both the macro- and microcontext data indicate that the effect depends on the national political debate. Further, the effects should be symmetric: Reagan supporters ought to move others toward Republican attitudes and away from Democratic; Carter supporters ought to move others toward Democratic attitudes and away from Republican. The first expectation is confirmed; the second is not (see Table 4). Given the nature of the 1980 campaign, the McPhee social-reality-test model predicts this asymmetry. Citizens in Reagan contexts would have had good news about Reagan and bad news about Carter confirmed by their peers. Those in Carter circles would find good news about Carter confirmed. However, given the relative one-sidedness of the Reagan presentation, these same individuals would find little bad news about Reagan to be confirmed by their friends. This twist in the evidence further indicates that the social circle is not an active independent force in politics but instead shapes information that comes from outside. Thus it is proper to think of the social environment not as a source of influence but as an intervening mechanism in a larger communication system.

Context and the Development of Individual Partisanship

So far our inquiry has relied on the notion that individual partisanship is a fixed psychic state. To be sure, the cross-temporal stability of party identification dwarfs that of party and candidate eval-

uations (and, by an even greater margin, that of issue orientations). One may feel safe that self-identification is a more fundamental political attitude than are feelings about politicians and political ideas. However, partisanship is not absolutely inert, and its evolution may be affected by the environment. Again, our expectation is that partisanship will converge toward the context's complexion, either toward friends' partisan orientations or toward the content of ongoing conversations.

In Table 6 we present analyses similar to those just above, this time for change in the individual's own partisan identification. For comparability, the familiar seven-point construct is here scaled in equal intervals from 0 to 100, *strong Republican* to *strong Democrat*. Discovering that the change can be modeled at all is a mild upset: movement in partisanship is not merely a function of measurement noise. The *added* explanatory power depicted at the top suggests that the social environment plays an important part in guiding the citizen's self-concept. The overall increase of 2.4% is all the greater when one understands that the individualistic model produces only 5.1% of the variance in partisanship's change.

Unlike sentiments toward the parties and candidates, however, it is friends' partisanship rather than their vote intention that is the major operational factor. While a trace of the hot communication effect can be seen, especially during the primary period, its contribution pales in comparison to that of friends' loyalties. The time breakdown indicates that this impact is felt in the June–September period and hardly at all during the spring. Importantly, partisanship's sensitivity to the environment is not constant but depends crucially on the framing of contemporary political debate.

The power of social influence is also notable. The coefficients in the lower portion of the table suggest that the social

Table 6. Joint Impact of Neighbors' Partisanship and Vote Intention
on Partisan Identification

Change in Partisanship by Time Interval	Neighbors' Partisanship	Neighbors' Vote Intention	Neighbors' Partisanship and Vote Intention
Additional Explanatory Power over Individualistic Model (Percent Adjusted R-square)			
1–2	– .1	.9	.7
2–3	3.2	.7	3.3
1–3	2.4	1.3	2.4
Impact Coefficients in Fully Specified Model			
1–2	1.1	13.0[a]*	
2–3	13.0*	–1.1[a]	
1–3	9.9*	6.0[a]	

Note: All estimates are taken from fully specified models of the form shown in Table 1. Only selected coefficients are presented here.
[a]The contrast is between a Reagan and a Carter environment (leaving Anderson supporters to the side).
*Coefficients significant at .05 level.

environment may move an individual about one-tenth of the scale toward his or her friends' attitudes. That is to say that a citizen imbedded in a homogeneous social circle will move almost one category of the party identification scale—say from weak Republican to strong Republican.

The data are consistent with the notion that self-identification relies on a different sort of social input than does candidate evaluation. Feelings toward the candidates are clearly more ephemeral in nature and describe an orientation toward others. Current, transitory, information plays the greatest part in influencing attitude change. A political self-definition, on the other hand, represents a more serious matter. Conversational content is not sufficient to generate change; instead, individuals respond to their friends' fundamental loyalties. This pattern suggests that self-identification depends on *imitative* rather than *cognitive* learning, with the citizen adopting friends' characters rather than reacting to what friends say. This understanding is buttressed by the timing of the social effect: it occurs during the June–September period, an interval when the contesting parties mobilize their loyalists. When political information is introduced to the discussion group in clearly partisan terms, the citizen's candidate evaluations are sensitive to the content of the political information, but the citizen's self-concept is sensitive to the carriers of the message.

Conclusion

We are able to confirm the basic proposition that individuals' political views are subject to social influence. The expected effects appear in both the county- and neighborhood-level analysis and, crucially, stand out in individual attitude changes over time. Beyond ascertaining existence, the analysis shows that context operates through interactions with identifiable friends and neighbors: concrete personal relations rather than amorphous community norms are the proximate

cause. Further, the empirical estimates indicate that social processes rival the power of psychological mechanisms in guiding attitude change. We are convinced that the social factor in shaping political information and political evaluations is real, tangible, and important.

We are also convinced that the process is complex. Both the macro and the micro data suggest that the contextual effect depends on the politics of the moment—the strength of the impact depends on the sorts of information that are being generated at different times during the campaign. The more precise micro data indicate that it is the content of contemporary conversations, rather than stable character of the social milieu, that generates the contextual phenomenon. They further show that social influence was most forceful for those in the discussion group who had short-term politics on their side (the Reagan as opposed to the Carter supporters). Thus context is not a constant force on politics, but one that shapes citizens' views of ebb and flow in the outside political world. Given our sparse theoretical understanding of the social influence process, none of this is altogether shocking. However, it is clear that context is an information channel, an intervening mechanism, rather than an independent agent in politics.

Finally, our results indicate that the dynamics of context itself may be complex as well. Our finding of influence stemming from neighbors' vote intentions rather than their partisanship certainly suggests a *contagion* model of social influence. As such, it is potentially explosive—even in the short run. When Reagan gained in popularity during 1980, his proponents became his missionaries to the uncoverted who, once turned, became missionaries on their own. Of course, our data are not adequate to support such inferences in detail; they can only indicate that it is the transitory rather than the permanent, the political attitude rather than

the self-identification, that is the crucial force. On the other hand, the development of partisanship suggests that long-term change is not so volatile. When individuals' self-identities react to the environment it is not to the immediate informational content but instead to the partisan loyalties of their peers. Thus the more stable political character of the environment dominates long-term change. This, of course, has explosive implications as well. If the informational content affected partisanship, then, given fluctuation in the parties' political fortunes, we might expect contexts to shift their political hue accordingly. However, the dominance of long-term loyalties on change in partisanship indicates that as one side in the social circle begins to dominate, it will grow explosively, feeding on its own numbers. Again, our data are limited in their application to this inference in their being based on one year's events. Even so, the major impact of partisanship on partisanship is generated only during the fall campaign—it does not appear to be constant in time. Thus we might expect the self-strengthening social process to be limited not by its dynamic structure but instead by its infrequent manifestation in the time domain.

The overall picture of social influence is one of interdependence. The effectiveness of context depends critically on the sorts of information generated by the external politics of the moment. Further, while our data only allow us to observe a citizen's political environment shaping the available information, we must presume that the citizen similarly acts as an input to the political environment as well. Finally, contagion dominates the theoretical structure and its form is often complex. Thus, the citizen's social circle plays a discernible and important role in the development of political evaluations, but its part is one of a cast of players rather than that of an independent actor.

Appendix

The Dynamic Model

The elementary estimation equation used here represents a simple model of opinion dynamics. Let us say that we wish to model the change in an individual's evaluation of Ronald Reagan. Here we use a response to a thermometer rating as a measure of the respondent's opinion at two times (say January and June, or $t1$ and $t2$). Each score may range from 0 to 100.

Now consider how to model a positive change in the individual's sentiment toward Reagan. Let us say the individual will raise the evaluation on encountering positive information about Reagan. Also note that the score can only reach a maximum of 100, so we take that into account as well. Write the positive change in the following functional form:

Δ^+ Reagan(1–2) = G(positive information

• [100 − Reagan(1)],

where Δ+ Reagan represents the upward change Reagan(2) − Reagan(1), G is a function indicating the individual's sensitivity to information, and the last term corrects for the amount of possible upward movement. Similarly write the downward movement as

Δ^- Reagan(1–2) = −G(negative information)

• Reagan(1).

Thus, we see that the observable change in Reagan evaluations is a function of the relative informational input and of an endogenous lag term. By this simple formulation we take into account the boundary effects (often approximated by logistic transformations) as well as reequilibration forces (often modeled by exogenously prescribed "forgetting" functions). The final result is a very simple expression.

Now our task is to model how the information that reaches a citizen is biased by the citizen's social environment while taking into account alternative biasing mechanisms. Consider three major mechanisms that will shape information (see text): reinforcement (or feedback), psychic guides, and the social environment. Letting f, p, and s be linear functions for feedback, psychological processes, and social influence, we may express the positive information that reaches the individual as

I = constant + p(partisanship, ideology, . . .)
  + s(environment) + f(Reagan[1]).

Putting the pieces together produces an equation of the form

Δ Reagan(1-2) = constant
  + p(partisanship, ideology, . . .)
  + s(environment) − r Reagan(1),

where now $r = g(1 - f)$ and the constant, p and s actually being g constant, gp and gs. We retain the negative sign for r (reinforcement and reequilibration) because in stable systems (and in our data) reequilibration typically dominates feedback. This, of course, represents a fairly simple model for empirical evaluation. In principle and if f were zero, we could actually estimate the proportion of positive information by dividing through by r. However, assuming f to be zero is implausible and in any case the estimate for r will be fraught with nonrandom measurement error. A more reasonable approach is to take the estimates for p and s as measures of the relative biasing of the information environment associated with the psychological and social mechanisms. These coefficients will prove central to this research.

County Context

The macro and micro measures of context differ qualitatively. To grasp the differences, note the following anomaly. For the macro measure, Democratic environments (in their historical traditions) were

associated with lowering evaluations of Carter and the Democratic party. Conversely, Democratic discussion environments (as marked by the vote intentions of particular neighbors) were associated with rising evaluations of Carter and the party. These results conflict and require explanation. Fortunately, the results yield additional insight into the nature of the measures themselves as well as their potential for further use.

Because county context is the most commonly employed measure of the political milieu, it is vital that we understand what its use implies. Is it a true proxy for the typical discussion environment, or does it represent some other aspect of political life? Our results indicate that the county-level measure does not simply mirror the discussion environment (otherwise the estimates using the micro data would correspond in sign). To appreciate the problem, recall that the county measure is constructed as the average Democratic (and, likewise, Republican) presidential vote for each county separately from 1972 to 1980: it marks the partisan tradition of the local environment. This can have only an indirect effect on the discussion environment of particular individuals (the bivariate correlations are modest). Norms in the environment will normally favor the Democratic party in areas where Democratic support has historically been heavy. However, those norms may not always be met by Democratic candidates: it is entirely possible that a traditionally Democratic environment will spur a short-term rejection of a presidential candidate whose posture fails to conform with traditional expectations.

In 1980 Jimmy Carter hardly represented the Democrats' Democrat. His governing philosophy and political failures seemed ill-tuned to the Democrat's song. Recall that 1980 was a problem-ridden year for the Democrats and their leadership. To many citizens,

foreign and domestic problems seemed particularly frustrating. American hostages were being held in Iran, and the economy suffered from both inflation and unemployment. It is plausible that those living in traditional Democratic contexts would have had unusually high expectations for a Democratic president (ones not fully captured in our model's controls) and thus suffered from unusually great disillusionment. Close examination of the survey data indicates that respondents living in Democratic environments reduced their (relatively higher) evaluations of Carter and the Democratic party more than those respondents living in Republican environments. Further, the political year was shaped by an unusual insurgency against the incumbent president: Kennedy claimed that Carter did not represent the true historical traditions of the Democracy. Notably, his campaign against Carter achieved its greatest success in the party's traditional strongholds. Correspondingly, the puzzling macroenvironmental impact was strongest during the bitterly divisive primary season. From this post hoc perspective it is understandable that the macrocontextual data seem to operate in perverse ways.

This interpretation is supported by an analysis of attitude change toward Kennedy. It reveals that the effects of the discussion environment, for both county and neighbor definitions, are positive—as expected—for change in evaluations of Kennedy throughout the year. The macrocontextual influence is similar to that for Reagan evaluations during the primary period, though it understandably diminishes after Kennedy's campaign expired. One must suppose that our results for the Carter candidacy are unusual: under normal conditions a Republican's Republican and a Democrat's Democrat benefit from a contextual bias in the commonly expected manner.

What can be concluded regarding the use of the county-level measure of an indi-

vidual's context? The historical-aggregate measure does reflect the probabilistic inclinations of the discussion environments, and its use will normally make sense. However, under unusual circumstances, when voter expectations (that are historically dependent) are not satisfied by party and presidential performance, the county-level measure represents something other than a simple partisan bias in the discussion environment. In this latter case, it can reflect the national and local traditions of politics from which contemporary parties, politicians, and events are judged.

Notes

This paper is the result of a genuinely joint venture. Both authors share equally in responsibility for the results and the interpretations.

1. Such institutional factors as differential party organizational strength and local media bias suggest themselves as alternatives. Empirical analyses of their impact over a quarter of a century indicate that the social influence considered here is not spurious. A fuller description of this work is under preparation.

2. We are grateful to the Inter-University Consortium for Social and Political Research for providing these data. Neither that organization or the ANES's principal investigators bear any responsibility for our errors of interpretation.

3. The inclusion of the full specification gives an edge to the intrapsychic mechanisms. It is arguable that many individual attitudes can be attributed to the influence of the social environment. Our purpose is to evaluate the power of the social component while bending over backwards to allow the individualistic model full play. In a sense we do this because the individualistic model dominates current work in the field and we need to present the strongest case for the addition of a social component to complement the theoretical structures.

Note that it is the *change* in attitude that is on the left-hand side of the estimation equation. A similar equation might be produced that put only the attitude (at $t2$) on the left, with the effect of extracting some consistency of the previous attitude (at $t1$) placed on the right-hand side. The substantive coefficient estimates would remain exactly the same, and the variance accounted for would jump about 20 points (in Table 1 the R-square is about .52). Such an alternate specification misleads, however, because the extra boost in predictive power is generated entirely by attitude consistency and not by the sub

stantively interesting variables. We are not trying to account for attitudes (at $t2$) but rather to examine observable change in attitudes. The "change" format is used here because it is explicitly produced by the elementary model derived in the Appendix and because it emphasizes the dynamic character of the evidence being considered.

4. The dependence of the contextual effect on the individual's previous evaluation is a powerful theoretical tool. Unfortunately, it is statistically impossible to separate the "straight" from the "interactive" effects because the collinearity of their estimators produces great imprecision. A number of tricks, including ridge regressions and a reparameterizing of the magnitude-dynamic components proved of no avail. Here we present the two specifications separately to give a hint of the potential power of the interactive specification.

5. Examining the two intervals separately and then the overall change provides different sorts of advantages. Of course, looking at the spring and fall intervals permits an identification of specific political events with the observable influence. On the other hand, an analysis of the full sweep of change provides evidence of the effects of the entire campaign on attitudes that were, more or less, at equilibrium in January. The difficulty with the June measurement is that it might reflect relatively transient attitudes affected by current events and as such provide an unstable baseline from which to assess change.

6. Each respondent was asked to name up to three neighbors with whom he or she socialized (in any way). After supplying some further identifying information, the respondent was then asked to give each specifically named neighbor's partisanship and current vote intention. The measure is, of course, fraught with possible inaccuracies. In particular, we might expect any respondent to misperceive the environment as being more compatible than it really is. Ordinary selective perception mechanisms may operate here. Further, the neighbor will have a "sociability" incentive to seek common ground with the respondent and thus appear more agreeable than would truly be the case. However, because we are interested in subsequent behavior, our tapping the individual's perceptions may be a particularly suitable tactic because it abstracts away such side issues. Further work on how these perceptions are formed will be of great interest: early returns from Huckfeldt and Sprague (1986) are promising.

Also elicited from the respondent was an indication of how often the respondent discussed politics with each neighbor. Conceptually, one would expect that the introduction of such descriptive information would tighten our analytic hold on neighborhood social influence. It does not. It may be that social influence is transmitted by means other than social contact. However, this and other previous work with these and similar measures bring into doubt the

utility of the empirical measure (often social influence is greater when no political discussion is reported; sometimes influence directly linked to specific political debate has a discernible contradictory impact; sometimes not). It is not at all clear that respondents agree about what constitutes a *political* conversation. It may well be the case that much political influence gets casually imbedded in everyday chats while washing the car or taking out the garbage.

The numerical coefficients reflect the full potential effect of being in an environment of three Democratic or Republican friends (the effect for each friend is about one-third of the coefficient in the table) in the fully specified model. Thus, for Table 3, the estimated effect of having three Republican friends on the respondent's evaluation of Reagan is 7.4 points while that of having three Democratic friends is (a noisy) 2.6 points. Of course many respondents could identify the politics of only one or two neighborhood friends. Fortunately for interpretation, the relationship between social influence and the number of Democratic or Republican friends is approximately linear. That is to say, for example, that the effect of having two Republican friends is about twice the effect of having only one (with the third adding slightly less than his or her full share). The variables are scored (0, .33, .66, 1.0) when the respondent volunteers none, one, two, or three neighbors as Democrats or Republicans respectively. Partisanship is similarly scaled 0–1: strong Republican to strong Democratic or the reverse, appropriately. Thus, the social variables are here scaled so that their *range* is equal to that of partisanship and direct comparison is made easy.

7. While the "socially" generated *added* explanatory power may seem relatively small, it must be noted that this format assumes that all "individualistic" factors such as partisanship, ideology, and the previous attitude arise independently. Their theoretical exogeneity is not at all clear (see the empirical results for partisanship). It is likely that much of the "individualistic" component merely reflects the previous workings of social phenomena that have long since been stored in the individual's psyche.

8. Here the actual numbers reflect the *difference* in effect between having a circle comprised of three Democratic (or Carter) friends or having three Republican (or Reagan) friends. The Anderson comparison is similarly constructed.

Because the estimates were obtained jointly, they suffer from a good deal of collinearity, and their standard errors range over about 5 points. Thus, those coefficients of less than 10 points are not, strictly speaking, discernible. Care should be taken in overinterpreting the results.

9. Though the weight of the evidence lies heavily on the side of social influence, one can never be sure. The contextual effect persists when one simultaneously takes into account the individual's partisanship, political interests and attitudes, and previous feeling toward the specific candidate or party. Nevertheless, one can always argue that the evident social effect merely indicates a more complicated individualistic, psychological phenomenon: individuals choose neighborhoods and their friends or misperceive their political character in a way that reflects psychological leanings not measured by the standard variables. Possibly so; it will never be possible to eliminate such argument. Yet special attention must be given to exogenous rather than endogenous explanations. Instead of arguing that people like the candidates and parties because they like the candidates and parties, the social communication tack seeks foothold outside the individual's psyche.

References

Berelson, Benard R., Paul F. Lazarsfeld, and William N. McPhee. 1954. *Voting.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bodman, A. R. 1983. The Neighborhood Effect: A Test of the Butler-Stokes Model. *British Journal of Political Science* 13:243–49.

Brown, Thad A. 1981. On Contextual Change and Partisan Attitudes. *British Journal of Political Science* 11:427–47.

Brown, Thad A. 1987. *Migration and Politics.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Butler, David, and Donald Stokes. 1969. *Political Change in Britain.* New York: St. Martin's Press.

Huckfeldt, R. Robert. 1983a. The Social Context of Political Change: Durability, Volatility, and Social Influence. *American Political Science Review* 77:929–44.

Huckfeldt, R. Robert. 1983b. Social Contexts, Social Networks, and Urban Neighborhoods: Environmental Constraints upon Friendship Choice. *American Journal of Sociology* 89:651–69.

Huckfeldt, R. Robert, and John Sprague. 1986. Social Contexts, Political Environments, and the Dynamics of Voter Preferences. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, DC.

Katz, Elihu, and Paul F. Lazarsfeld. 1955. *Personal Influence.* New York: Free Press.

Langton, Kenneth P., and Ronald Rapoport. 1975. Social Structure, Social Context, and Partisan Mobilization: Urban Workers in Chile. *Comparative Political Studies* 8:318–44.

McPhee, William N. 1963. A Theory of Informal Social Influence. In *Formal Theories of Mass Behavior*, ed. William N. Phee. New York: Free Press.

McPhee, William N., and Robert B. Smith. 1962. A Model for Analyzing Voting Systems. In *Public Opinion and Congressional Elections*, ed.

William N. McPhee and William A. Glaser. New York: Macmillan.

Miller, Warren E. 1956. One-party Politics and the Voter. *American Political Science Review* 50: 707–25.

Miller, William L. 1977. *Electoral Dynamics.* London: Macmillan.

Prysby, Charles L. 1976. Community Partisanship and Individual Voting Behavior: Methodological Problems of Contextual Analysis. *Political Methodology* 3:183–89.

Putnam, Robert D. 1966. Political Attitudes and the Local Community. *American Political Science Review* 60:640–54.

Robinson, John P. 1976. Interpersonal Influence in Election Campaigns: Two Step-Flow Hypotheses. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 40:304–19.

Sprague, John. 1982. Is There a Micro Theory Consistent with Contextual Analysis? In *Strategies of Political Inquiry*, ed. Elinor Ostrom. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Tingsten, Herbert. 1937. *Political Behaviour.* London: King.

Weatherford, M. Stephen. 1982. Interpersonal Networks and Political Behavior. *American Journal of Political Science* 26:117–43.

Michael MacKuen is Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Missouri, St. Louis, MO 63121.

Courtney Brown is Assistant Professor of Political Science, Emory University, Atlanta, GA 30322.