

Political Socialization

How old were you when you first had views about government and politics? Were you in your teens? Ten years old? Even younger? Most likely, your political opinions began to form early in life, during your childhood. The political outlooks of elementary schoolchildren generally focus on objects such as the nation and the flag as well as the president and other highly visible political leaders. Typically, these views are positive, with younger children evaluating the United States favorably and believing that the president is a good person. As children grow older, these attitudes become less positive for many of them. Furthermore, other types of opinions, such as party affiliation or views toward specific policy issues and social groups, begin to form in adolescence.

Political socialization is the development of political attitudes. More specifically, it is “the process by which people acquire relatively enduring orientations toward politics in general and toward their own particular political systems.”¹ During childhood and adolescent socialization, one’s political opinions are influenced by a variety of people and institutions, such as family, peers, the media, and schools. In this chapter, we focus on one very important agent of socialization—parents—and their role in shaping the fundamental political attitude of party identification.

While socialization begins in childhood, this process can, and often does, continue throughout one’s lifetime. Certainly some people enter adulthood with fully formed opinions that remain relatively stable. More commonly, however, views developed during childhood and adolescence do change as people age. There are many reasons for this, including those that accompany aging as well as responses to specific political events. Later in this chapter, we will explore three specific adult socialization processes: life cycle, generational, and period effects. First, though, let’s focus on parents.

PARENTAL SOCIALIZATION

It might surprise you to know that socialization scholars long assumed parents exert a strong influence on the political opinions of their children. If so, perhaps it shouldn’t. In some households, children are exposed to their parents’ discussions of political matters, even participating in those discussions as they grow older. A similarity in attitudes can result. Parents also pass on nonpolitical outlooks and values that are related to political opinions, such as a preference for order and stability that can lead to political conservatism.

In the 1960s socialization scholars demonstrated that the political attitudes of adolescents and young adults were fairly similar—although not identical—to their parents, especially with regard to political party affiliation. In contrast, children’s attitudes toward specific political issues, civil liberties, and social groups were found to be less similar to those of their parents.² Thus, it appears that parents can play an influential role in shaping the opinions of their offspring, at least for some political attitudes. Children’s attitudes are also clearly influenced by other factors, including different agents of socialization.

Building from the conclusion that parental influence is greatest for party affiliation, we will explore two related topics. First, we will examine whether a child’s partisanship is more closely related to the political views of the child’s mother or father. Second, we will explore whether the relationship between parents’ and their offspring’s party identification has changed over the years.

To begin, go to <http://sda.berkeley.edu> and click on Archive. Then click on ANES Cumulative Datafile 1948–2004 (ANES stands for American National Election Study). You should see the Main Page. For our analyses of this data set, we will use the default weight variable VCF0009A. If VCF0009A does not appear in the Weight box on the right side of the page, select it from the drop-down window.

Before we begin our analyses, let’s see what party identification variables are available in this ANES datafile. In the lower window on the left side of the page, click on the plus sign next to Partisanship; Party Measures. You should now see a list of variables, nearly all of which measure political party-related attitudes. Scan down the list and you will soon see a number of party identification variables. Click on the first one: VCF0301 - 7-pt Scale Party Identification. That will pop VCF0301 into the Selected box above.

To determine exactly what this variable measures, click the View button next to the Selected box. You’ll see a series of questions at the top of the View page. All respondents were asked the first question then a follow-up one. The content of the follow-up question depended on how they answered the first question. Democrats and Republicans, for instance, were asked whether they were strong partisans. Independents and (in some years) those indicating support for a third party or no political party were asked whether they felt close to either the Democratic or Republican Party. The end result is the party identification variable we see here. It is a seven-point scale that combines responses to both questions that respondents answered. If this measurement of party identification looks familiar, it should, since it is essentially the same as the General Social Survey (GSS) party identification variable we discussed in [chapter 1](#).

Unlike the GSS, the ANES also contains a few other party affiliation variables. Sometimes we will want to analyze the seven-point party identification scale, while at other times we will prefer to use a variable with fewer categories. When we prefer the latter, we can always recode variables to collapse the response options into fewer categories. In this case, though, we do not need to recode. The ANES datafile already contains recoded party identification variables, so we will use one of those. Specifically, we will use VCF0303 - Party ID Collapsed (1). Click on that variable in the variable list, then click on View next to the Selected box.

This collapsed party affiliation variable contains only four response options: Democrats (including leaners), Independents, Republicans (including leaners), and Apolitical. You are probably wondering what leaners are. They are people who first indicate their party affiliation as Independent, but then, in answering the follow-up question, state that they feel close to one of the two major parties. In other words, they “lean” toward one of the parties. And, as it turns out, these leaners actually behave similarly to partisans (that is, those people who initially express support for one of the parties). Thus, it makes sense to include them with the supporters of the party they lean toward, rather than to classify them as pure Independents. As for the Apoliticals, they are respondents who do not consider themselves partisan, do not feel close to either party, and express (in response to other questions) a low level of interest in politics.

Now that we have selected the variable we will use for our analyses, let’s do a frequency analysis of VCF0303. Back on the Main Page, VCF0303 should still be in the Selected box. Click on Row underneath the Selected box, which will pop VCF0303 into the Row box on the right. Click on Run the Table. Examine the output and answer the questions below.

1. What percentage of respondents are Democratic?
 - a. 10.9%
 - b. 35.3%
 - c. 52.0%
2. How many respondents are Republican?
 - a. 906
 - b. 17,308
 - c. 25,478
 - d. 49,031
3. Which of the following statements is the most accurate?
 - a. A majority of respondents are Democratic.
 - b. There are more Independents and Apolitical respondents than Republicans.
 - c. A plurality of respondents are Republican.
 - d. Independents make up less than 5% of respondents.
4. Which of the following statements is the most accurate?
 - a. A majority of respondents are Republican.
 - b. There are more Apolitical respondents than Independents.
 - c. A majority of respondents are Independents.
 - d. Nearly 90% of respondents identify with either the Democratic or Republican Party.

Let's check your answers to these questions. The correct answer to question 1 is c. 52.0%. Fifty-two percent of ANES respondents classified themselves as Democrats. The correct answer to question 2 is b. 17,308. Out of the 49,031 total respondents, 17,308 are Republicans. Keep in mind that we have analyzed the ANES cumulative datafile, which includes surveys conducted from 1948 through 2004. This is why there are so many respondents. The correct answer to question 3 is a. A majority of respondents are Democrats. The correct answer to question 4 is d. Nearly 90% of respondents identify with either the Democratic or Republican Party. These answers highlight two important results from our frequency analysis. First, more than one-half of the respondents identify as Democratic. Second, nearly every respondent (87.3%) identifies as either a Democrat or Republican (again, when the leaners are classified as partisans). Nearly 11% are Independents, while only 1.8% are categorized as Apolitical.

With this knowledge of party identification among ANES respondents, we are ready to move on to see whether the partisanship of the respondents is more similar to that of their mothers or fathers. To do this, we will conduct crosstabulation analyses.

Return to the Main Page. Since we are trying to determine whether a person's parents' party identification influences his or her own identification, the respondents' party identification (VCF0303) will be the dependent variable. Thus, VCF0303 will be the row variable. If VCF0303 does not appear in the Row box, type the variable name in that box. Before moving on, though, we are going to remove the Apolitical respondents from our analysis. We are interested in the transmission of party identification from parents to children, but, by definition, Apoliticals are not party identifiers. Furthermore, there are very few people who are classified as Apolitical, so removing them will not eliminate many respondents.

Fortunately, removing the Apolitical respondents is quite simple. We will specify which values of VCF0303 we want included in the analysis, making sure to not include Apoliticals in this specification. To do this, after VCF0303 in the Row box, type (1-3). The Row box should now look like this: VCF0303 (1-3). Only values 1 (Democrats), 2 (Independents), and 3 (Republicans) will be analyzed now; the Apoliticals will be excluded.

Now we need our independent variable—the party affiliation of one parent. Back on the left side of the Main Page, in the list of variables within the Partisanship; Party Measures category, click on VCF0306 - R Father Party ID. The R in the variable label refers to respondent; in other words, the person who is answering the survey questions. So, this variable appears to be the respondent's assessment of his or her father's party identification. To confirm, click on View next to the Selected box and examine the question wording. From this window, we can also see that there are four response options for this variable: Democrat, Independent, Republican, and Other. As with our respondent party identification variable, we will examine only the first three categories, thus removing those who responded Other. Back on the Main Page, click on Col beneath the Selected box. This will pop VCF0306 to the Column box on the right. After VCF0306 in the Column box, type the following: (1-3). The Column box should now look like this: VCF0306 (1-3). Finally, click on Run the Table.

What does this crosstab tell us about the relationship between a person's party identification and that of his or her father? There are a lot of numbers in this table, so let's examine it column by column. In fact, concentrating on separate columns and comparing the columns to each other is the best way to examine a crosstab. First, though, consider what the table would have looked like if we had used the seven-point party identification scale. Instead of nine table cells (three columns and three rows), there would be twenty-one (three columns and seven rows)! This is a very good example of when it is useful to collapse variables into fewer categories.

Let's begin with the Democrat column. Since the column variable is the partisanship of the respondent's father, this column includes only those people whose fathers identified themselves as Democrats when the respondents were children. As the data show, 73.4% of these respondents are Democrats themselves. Eight percent are Independents and 18.5% are Republican. In other words, most offspring of Democratic fathers are Democrats as adults. Skipping to the third column, we see that a similar pattern exists for those with Republican fathers, although the transmission of Republican partisanship is lower than Democratic partisanship. More specifically, 67.5% of people with Republican fathers grew up to be Republicans, while close to 25% became Democrats and nearly 8% Independents.

What about children of Independent fathers? The middle column shows us that they are most likely to be Democrats as adults (39.4%), slightly less likely to be Republicans (36.8%), and least likely to be Independents (23.8%). When one's father is an Independent, then, he or she is more likely to be either Democratic or Republican than Independent. However, children of Independent fathers are more likely to be Independent (23.8%) than are children of Democratic (8.1%) or Republican (7.8%) fathers. (Of course, all of the respondents who complete an ANES survey are adults. Here, and throughout the chapter, we refer to some respondents as children, only to differentiate them from their parents. Distinguishing among parents and offspring is important, since we are focusing on the transmission of political attitudes across generations. Keep in mind, though, that the survey results are only from adults, even when we categorize some respondents as children.)

Overall, the results from this analysis show us that a citizen's party affiliation is related to that of the citizen's father. Furthermore, the transmission of party affiliation from fathers to their offspring is most likely for partisan fathers (particularly Democrats) and unlikely for Independent fathers. This relationship is nicely presented in the stacked bar chart that appears below the crosstabulation table.

Mothers' Transmission of Party Identification

Are people more likely to share the party identification of their mothers or their fathers? To answer this question, you will need to refer back to the crosstab you just conducted, so be sure to keep the output from that analysis open. Then return to the Main Page to conduct a crosstabulation analysis comparing the respondents' party identification to that of their mothers. To begin, view the question wording for the variable VCF0307 - R Mother Party ID. Then conduct the crosstabulation, using VCF0303 as the row variable and VCF0307 as the column variable. Include only values 1–3 for each variable. Answer the questions below.

1. How many children of Democratic mothers are Democrats?

a. 712

b. 1,728

c. 7,242

d. 9,682
2. Which of the following statements about children of Democratic mothers is the most accurate?

a. Most are Independents.

b. A plurality is Republicans.

c. Nearly three-quarters are Democrats.
3. What percentage of children of Republican mothers are Republicans?

a. 37.6%

b. 68.2%

c. 17.8%

d. 23.3%
4. Children of Independent mothers are

a. Most likely to be Republican

b. Most likely to be Independents

c. Slightly more likely to be Democratic than Republican

d. Slightly more likely to be Republican than Democratic
5. Use your output to complete the table below (you will find this useful for answering questions 6 and 7 and for completing [Exercise 2-2](#)). You only need to enter the percentages.

Table 2-1 Respondent Party Affiliation by Mother’s Party Affiliation

VCF0303 (Respondent’s party identification)	VCF0307 (Mother’s party identification)		
	Democrat	Independent	Republican
Democrat	74.8%		
Independent			
Republican			
Total			

6. What is the relationship between the party affiliation of mothers and their offspring? Your answer should be two to three sentences long.
7. Is a citizen more likely to share the party identification of the citizen's mother or father? To answer this question, use the table above as well as the crosstab from your analysis of VCF0303 and VCF0306 (which is hopefully still open on your computer).

a. Party identification is generally more similar to one’s father than mother.

b. Party identification is generally more similar to one’s mother than father.

c. The relationship between a citizen's party identification and that of the citizen's father is nearly identical to the relationship between the citizen's party identification and that of the citizen's mother.

d. Party identification is generally not related to either a citizen's father or mother.
- Exercise 2-2
- Parental Transmission of Party Identification over the Decades
- Since we have been analyzing the ANES Cumulative Datafile, the crosstabulation analyses you have conducted combined data from many different years. Specifically, all ANES surveys conducted between 1948 and 2004 that contained the variables in our analyses were included. The party identification variable (VCF0303) has been included on all ANES surveys since 1952, while the parental party identification variables (VCF0306 and VCF0307) were contained in eleven different surveys between 1952 and 1992. So far we have explored the relationship between parent and child party identification without considering whether this relationship has changed over the years. Now let’s consider this relationship at specific points in time.
- It is possible, of course, that parental transmission of party affiliation to their children has remained fairly constant over time. On the other hand, it might be reasonable to expect that parents would have had a stronger

influence over their children's partisanship in certain decades compared to others. In particular, the broader political and social context might affect children's adoption of their parents' party affiliation. We often think of the 1960s as a time of rebellion among young people—rebellion against the government, against the status quo, against authority figures, and even against parents. In contrast, the 1950s are described as a time when people, including children, were more trusting of authority figures and more supportive of the status quo. While these descriptions are oversimplifications of those decades, they nevertheless suggest that children's party affiliation might have been closer to their parents before the 1960s than after that decade. In this exercise, we will test this assumption (or hypothesis).

To simplify matters, we will examine only the relationship between mothers' partisanship and that of their children. (It is worth noting, however, that our conclusions to these analyses are essentially the same whether we examine mothers' or fathers' party identification.) If you just completed [Exercise 2-1](#), you should still have VCFO303 (1-3) in the Row box and VCFO307 (1-3) in the Column box on the Main Page. If you don't, enter these variable names (specifying that you want to examine values 1–3 only for each) into the appropriate boxes on the Main Page. We are using the ANES Cumulative Datafile 1948–2004; the weight variable should be VCFO009A.

Once you have the correct row and column variables, you need to restrict your analyses to specific years. We will begin by examining data from the 1958 ANES survey. To do so, type the following in the Selection Filter(s) box: VCFO004(1958). VCFO004 is the name of the year variable in the ANES Cumulative Datafile, while the 1958 in parentheses after VCFO004 specifies to the Survey Documentation and Analysis (SDA) software that we only want to analyze respondents who completed the survey in 1958. Click on Run the Table and answer the questions below.

1. How many people were included in this crosstabulation analysis?
 - a. 734
 - b. 727
 - c. 1,234
 - d. 444
2. In 1958, of those with Democratic mothers, what percentage were Democrats?
 - a. 21.2%
 - b. 83%
 - c. 10.8%
 - d. 6.3%
3. In 1958, of those with Democratic mothers, what percentage were Republicans?
 - a. 21.2%
 - b. 10.8%
 - c. 6.3%
 - d. 75.9%
4. Which of the following statements best characterizes the partisanship of people with Republican mothers?
 - a. A large majority (over three-quarters) were Republican while very few were Independents.
 - b. There were equal numbers of Republicans and Democrats.
 - c. A larger percentage of them were Republicans compared to the percentage of respondents with Democratic mothers who were Democrats.
5. Overall, how would you characterize the relationship between children's party affiliation and that of their mothers in 1958?
 - a. Children's party affiliation was not at all similar to that of their mothers.
 - b. Regardless of a child's being mother Democratic, Independent, or Republican, the child was very likely to have the same party affiliation as his or her mother.
 - c. Children of Democratic and Republican mothers were very likely to have the same party affiliation as their mothers while children of Independent mothers were not likely to be Independent.
6. Compare this crosstab to that conducted on the full cumulative datafile (refer back to your table in question 5 of [Exercise 2-1](#)). Compared to our examination of all years in the datafile, children's party affiliations in 1958 were
 - a. Less similar to their mother's
 - b. More similar to their mother's

Now let's examine this same relationship for the year 1970. Please keep open the crosstab from the analysis of 1958 respondents, as you will need to compare that to the 1970 results. To analyze respondents from 1970, replace 1958 in the parentheses within the Selection Filter(s) box with 1970. Click on Run the Table and answer the questions below.

7. In 1970, of those with Democratic mothers, what percentage were Democrats?
 - a. 29.3%
 - b. 70.2%
 - c. 18.9%
 - d. 61.0%
8. In 1970, of those with Republican mothers, what percentage were Republicans?
 - a. 29.3%
 - b. 70.2%
 - c. 18.9%
 - d. 61.0%
9. Children of Independent mothers were
 - a. Most likely to be Independent
 - b. Most likely to be Republican
 - c. Least likely to be Independent and most likely to be Democratic
 - d. Least likely to be Independent and most likely to be Republican
10. Overall, how would you characterize the relationship between children's party affiliation and that of their mothers in 1970?
 - a. Children's party affiliation was not at all similar to that of their mothers.
 - b. Regardless of their mother being Democratic, Independent, or Republican, children were very likely to have the same party affiliation as their mothers.
 - c. Children of Democratic and Republican mothers were very likely to have the same party affiliation as their mothers, especially in the case of Democratic mothers.

11. Compare your 1970 analysis to that from 1958. Is there support for our hypothesis that parental transmission of party affiliation was stronger before the 1960s than after this decade? Your answer should be two to three sentences long and incorporate specific results from your analysis.

ADULT SOCIALIZATION

We all enter adulthood with at least some opinions about politics, whether these views have been influenced by our parents or other agents of socialization. The socialization process does not end at age eighteen, however. For most of us, political attitudes are not static throughout our lives. There are many reasons why our opinions might change, such as exposure to new people and new information, changes to the political context, our own life experiences, and so forth. Among these many factors, socialization scholars have primarily focused on three routes by which preadult attitudes might change as people mature.

The first route highlights the fact that the process of becoming older might influence people's political attitudes. This is called the life cycle explanation. Most simply, the focus is on how political opinions are shaped by one's age, or place in the life cycle. One life cycle effect relates to the stability of attitudes. The opinions of those just entering adulthood tend to be more changeable than the opinions of older people, largely because younger adults face many new experiences during this time in their lives. When some of these experiences are relevant to politics, political opinions can be altered. As a person ages, new experiences are rarer so attitudes tend to be more stable. Life cycle effects other than attitude stability also occur. You will explore one of these in the next section of this chapter.

The other two processes that socialization researchers have explored both focus on the influence of political context on the attitudes of the public. A significant event or change in the political context can strongly shape the political attitudes of many people. These are called period effects, because attitudes have been influenced by a political period. One example of a period effect relates to party affiliation. In the first half of the twentieth century, political parties were quite strong in the United States. Political candidates tied themselves closely to their parties and the party organizations organized a great deal of grassroots political activity. Beginning in the 1950s this situation changed. Television news coverage of elections focused on candidates as people rather than as representatives of a party. Candidates themselves began to organize their own campaigns, and politics in general was less tied to the political parties. This changed context resulted in a larger proportion of citizens identifying as Independents rather than Democrats or Republicans. This change occurred across people of all ages. Furthermore, the increased likelihood of a person identifying as an Independent has lasted for decades.

In contrast, a significant event might influence the opinions only of certain people rather than most of the population. In one example of this, when the attitudes of people of the same age, or same generation, have been influenced by the political context, a generational effect has occurred. Generational effects are most common among citizens in their formative years (adolescence and early adulthood; also known as the impressionable years). When people come of political age during a highly significant event or during a changed political context, their attitudes can be different than those who are older or younger and remain different throughout their lives.

Keep in mind one final note on period and generational effects. These effects are presumed by socialization scholars to be long-lasting and to influence many people. It is not unusual for the political opinions of a person to change a bit throughout his life. One might, for example, be a Democrat when entering adulthood, then become dissatisfied with the Democratic Party or influenced by a spouse or friends and change affiliation to Independent. After a few years, the person might change affiliation again. While such temporary changes are significant for this one person, they do not qualify as a period or a generational effect because the change to Independent was not enduring. Furthermore, the change in political attitudes for one person is of smaller magnitude than what is typically meant by a period or generational effect. Since socialization scholars who study these effects are primarily interested in identifying large-scale attitude changes due to the political context, individual change such as this would not qualify. Although such temporary changes, even among only a few people, are worthy of attention by public opinion scholars, they simply are not the focus of socialization researchers. These scholars are much more concerned with whether and when the political context can alter key political attitudes across the citizenry.

Exercise 2-3

Few events of recent memory have rivaled the significance of the September 11, 2001, attacks in the United States. Did this event have lasting effects on the political opinions of U.S. citizens? If so, were the attitudes of these citizens across all age cohorts (groups) altered, or were the views of people in their impressionable years particularly affected? In this exercise you will search for evidence of a period and a generational effect in response to the 9/11 attacks.

Despite a reasonable expectation that the events of 9/11 would have large and enduring effects on the political opinions of the public, it is possible that opinions were not altered. In other words, perhaps neither a period nor a generational effect occurred after 9/11. If this is the case, it would reinforce the importance of childhood and adolescence socialization and demonstrate that attitudes are fairly resistant to political events, even major ones such as the 9/11 attacks.

A number of political attitudes might have been influenced by the 9/11 attacks. It seems reasonable to assume that patriotism, attitudes toward the nation, and views toward national symbols such as the flag would have been affected. Unfortunately, however, neither the ANES nor the GSS surveys measured such attitudes over different years, so we cannot examine whether they changed after 9/11. Another set of political attitudes that were potentially influenced by the attacks were views toward the national government and national leaders. During times of crisis, citizens tend to view the government and their political leaders more favorably. Let's examine whether this happened after 9/11.

To explore this topic, we'll analyze GSS data, specifically the GSS Cumulative Datafile 1972–2008. Go to <http://sda.berkeley.edu>, click on Archive, and then click on GSS Cumulative Datafile 1972–2008. You should see the Main Page. Ensure that compwt appears in the Weight box on the Main Page. The GSS asks its respondents whether they have confidence in a variety of groups and organizations, some of which are political. To see a list of these confidence variables, click on the plus sign next to Societal Concerns on the lower left side of the page. Then click on the plus sign next to Confidence in Institutions. Scan down the list of variables until you see CONFED - Confid. in Exec Branch of Fed Govt. Click on it, then click on the View button in order to see the question wording and

response options for this variable. (There is also a variable called CONFEDY in the list, but ignore that one. We want to analyze CONFED.)

Before examining whether citizens’ confidence in the executive branch was altered by the 9/11 attacks, we’ll first examine CONFED more thoroughly. Back on the Main Page, click on the Row button beneath the Selected box so that we can conduct a frequency analysis of this variable. Next click on the box next to Summary statistics in the Table Options section on the right side of the Main Page. Doing so will generate some statistical results in addition to the frequency table. Click on Run the Table. Examine the output window, beginning with the frequency table. You will notice that a slight majority of respondents (52.7%) express only some confidence in the executive branch of the federal government. An additional 30.1% have hardly any confidence in this branch of government, whereas only 17.2% possess a great deal of confidence. Overall, then, it seems that confidence in the executive branch among the American public is not very high.

Beneath the frequency table, you should notice other statistical results. For this exercise, we will focus our attention on the mean. As you probably already know, the mean is the arithmetic average of the responses. Stated another way, the mean presents, with only one number, a summary of all of the responses. For CONFED, the mean tells us how much confidence, on average, the respondents have in the executive branch. As you will soon see, when comparing results over time, being able to focus on only one statistic for each year can be useful. If you want to read more about means, you can always refer to the reference appendix.

To interpret the mean, you need to refer to the values assigned to the response options for the question. Since the mean for CONFED is 2.13, we know that the average response is in between 2 (only some confidence) and 3 (hardly any confidence), albeit much closer to 2. Thus, the mean confirms what we concluded when examining the frequency distribution: the public does not have high levels of confidence in the executive branch.

At times interpreting means can be a bit tricky, so it bears repeating that you need to pay very careful attention to the values assigned to the response options when interpreting means. For CONFED, the highest level of confidence (a great deal) is assigned the value of 1. (Another way to say it is that the highest level of confidence is coded as a 1.) This means that the smaller the mean, the more confidence the public has in the executive branch. For example, if the mean for CONFED was 2.5 in 2000 and 1.5 in 2002, we would conclude that confidence in the executive branch had increased over time (even though the numerical value of the mean decreased from 2.5 to 1.5).

Returning to the main focus of this exercise—exploring whether public confidence in the executive branch increased after 2001—we will examine responses to CONFED over time. To do so, go to the Main Page and conduct a crosstabulation analysis with CONFED as the dependent (row) variable and YEAR as the independent (column) variable. Because we also want to examine means, ensure that the box next to Summary statistics is checked. In the output window, SDA will present the mean on CONFED for each year (that is, for each column of the crosstab). Finally, a useful way to analyze change over time is to examine a line chart. Under Chart Options on the right side of the page, select Line Chart in the drop-down window next to Type of chart. Click on Run the Table and answer the questions below. To do so, you will need to examine percentages, means, and the line chart in the output window.

First, though, take a minute to consider the nature of the data you will be analyzing. The GSS cumulative file contains data from respondents who completed GSS surveys in specific years all combined together into one dataset. Each year, a different sample of U.S. adults was interviewed. This type of data is known as cross-sectional. In contrast, a panel study is one in which the same people are surveyed at multiple points in time. Since you will be examining whether people’s attitudes changed due to the 9/11 events, it would be ideal to examine panel data so that you could see whether the opinions of specific people changed. Unfortunately, however, panel studies are difficult and expensive to conduct, so cross-sectional surveys are more common and readily available for us to analyze. In the analyses that follow, then, you will not examine whether individual people’s attitudes changed after 9/11 but whether the attitudes of U.S. adults in the aggregate were markedly different after that date.

1. Compared to 2000, the percentage of citizens in 2002 who had a great deal of confidence in executive branch officials

a. Remained the same

b. Decreased

c. Slightly increased

d. Nearly doubled
2. Compared to 2000, the percentage of citizens in 2002 who had hardly any confidence in executive branch officials

a. Remained the same

b. Slightly decreased

c. Decreased nearly 15 percentage points

d. Increased
3. Examine the line chart, focusing specifically on the “a great deal” line and the “hardly any” lines. What do you conclude about public confidence in the executive branch between 2000 and 2008, particularly in comparison to the trend in these lines throughout the entire time period?
4. Which of the following most accurately describes the over-time trend in public confidence in executive branch officials? Focus on the means to answer this question.

a. Confidence in executive branch officials increased after the 9/11 attacks and remained higher than pre-2001 levels through 2008.

b. Confidence in executive branch officials increased after the 9/11 attacks then steadily decreased. By 2008 confidence was lower than 2000 levels.

c. Confidence in executive branch officials increased after the 9/11 attacks then immediately decreased to be lower than pre-2001 levels.
5. Based on these analyses and bearing in mind what socialization researchers mean by a period effect, is there any evidence of a period effect on public confidence in executive branch officials due to the 9/11

attacks? Incorporate specific results from the crosstab and means into your answer.

6. To explore whether the 9/11 attacks produced a generational effect on public confidence in the executive branch, we need to examine levels of confidence over time for different age groups. In particular, we will compare trends in confidence for those aged 18–25 in 2001 versus those aged 40–60 in that year. The former were in their impressionable years on September 11, 2001, while the latter were past this life stage.

Examining this topic will require conducting many analyses. This is because you need to isolate two specific age groups for five different years—in 2000, to establish a pre-2001 baseline, then in the four years since 2001 when GSS surveys were conducted. The age groups that you need to isolate will change for every year. Since we want to know whether the attitudes of those aged 18–25 in 2001 changed after the 9/11 attacks, we need to determine how old these citizens were for the years of the GSS surveys. For example, in 2002 this cohort was aged 19–26. In 2004 they were 21–28. Similar calculations need to be made for those aged 40–60 in 2001. We did these calculations for you, and present them in [Table 2-2](#).

The variable you will analyze is CONFED, so go to the Main Page and ensure that that variable appears in the Row box (and that the Column box is empty). Next, you will isolate the specific age groups for the specific years using the filtering feature of SDA. To begin, ideally we would examine the mean on CONFED for those aged 17–24 in 2000. This, of course, is the group that was 18–25 in 2001. The GSS, however, does not interview anyone who is under the age of 18, so for this analysis we will have to examine those who were 17–24 in 2000 instead of 17–24. To do so, we need to filter on two different variables (age and year of survey completion). Fortunately, this is easy to do: simply type the following in the Selection Filter(s) box: AGE (18-24) YEAR (2000). Note that you do not need to type “and” in between the two variables; a space will suffice. Finally, make sure that the box next to Summary statistics is checked. Click on Run the Table.

In the output window, you will see that the mean level of confidence in the executive branch for respondents aged 18–24 in 2000 was 2.06. We placed that mean in the appropriate cell in the table below. Next, complete [Table 2-2](#) by running more frequency analyses on CONFED, isolating the specific age group and year for each empty table cell. As a check on your work, we completed one more cell in the table. Once the table is complete, refer to it as you answer questions 7–9.

Table 2-2 Mean Confidence in the Executive Branch by Age Cohort and Year

Age in 2001		Year of GSS surveys				
		2000	2002	2004	2006	2008
18–25	Age in year of GSS survey	18–24	19–26	21–28	23–30	25–32
	Mean level of confidence	2.06				
40–60	Age in year of GSS survey	39–59	41–61	43–63	45–65	47–67
	Mean level of confidence		1.91			

7. Among those aged 18–25 years old in 2001, confidence in executive branch officials
- a. Decreased steadily after 2001
 - b. Increased significantly after 2001 and stayed at this increased level through 2008
 - c. Did not change much between 2000 and 2004, then declined through 2008
 - d. Did not change after 2000
8. Among those aged 40–60 years old in 2001, confidence in the executive branch
- a. Did not change after 2000
 - b. Increased significantly between 2000 and 2002, then declined through 2008
 - c. Fluctuated up and down after 2001
 - d. Increased steadily after 2001
9. Is there any evidence of a generational effect on public confidence in executive branch officials due to the 9/11 attacks?
- a. Yes, changes in confidence among 18–25 year olds were durable, but changes for 40–60 year olds were not.
 - b. Yes, changes in confidence among 40–60 year olds were durable, but changes for 18–25 year olds were not.
 - c. No, there was not a lasting change in confidence for either age group.
10. Based on all of the analyses you conducted in [Exercise 2-3](#), did the 9/11 attacks have a lasting impact on public confidence in the executive branch? What might explain the patterns you uncovered in your analyses?

FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION: LIFE CYCLE EFFECTS

Do political attitudes change in predictable ways as people advance through the life cycle? Conventional wisdom suggests that they do, at least for one political view: ideology. We often hear that citizens become more conservative as they age, but is this actually true? To answer this question, you will conduct a crosstabulation analysis of ideology by age using ANES data.

Begin by opening up the ANES Cumulative Datafile 1948–2004 and verify that the weight variable is set to VCF0009A. Political ideology will be the row variable for the analysis. The ideology variable that we will use is VCF0804. View that variable. You will see that there are four response options, including those who do not know their ideology or have not thought much about it. We are primarily interested in examining those who stated their ideology, so we will exclude the DK; haven't thought much about it category from our analysis. Do you remember how to do that? Specify that you want to examine only categories 1, 2, and 3 of VCF0804 by typing the following in the Row box: VCF0804 (1-3). The column variable will be age; for this analysis, we will use VCF0102. Click on the box next to Summary statistics (to generate the mean), click on Run the Table, then answer the questions below. When answering questions 1 and 2, be sure to incorporate specific means and results from the crosstab.

1. Are older people more conservative than younger people? Are the oldest people the most conservative?
2. Conventional wisdom also suggests that younger people are more liberal than older people. Is this true?
3. Posit some explanations for the results of this analysis of ideology by age. In other words, why might political ideology differ across age groups in the pattern presented in the crosstab?

MINI-RESEARCH PROJECT

Earlier in this chapter, you analyzed ANES survey data in order to compare the party identification of citizens to that of their parents. As you no doubt recall, the ANES surveys asked respondents to indicate what the party affiliation of their fathers and mothers had been while they (the respondents) were growing up. For someone who is conducting a national survey, this approach to measuring the party identification of parents is easy to implement because it only requires adding two questions to the survey. It is not the best way, however, to assess the partisanship of parents. Some people might not actually know the partisanship of their parents and would have to guess or not answer the question. Others might falsely assume that their parents' party identification is the same as their own. Because of these possibilities, a better approach is to survey parents and children separately, asking them all to report their party affiliation, then compare the results. Though more precise, this method is more time consuming and expensive since more people need to be surveyed. Thus, most national surveys opt for the approach used by the ANES.

For this mini-research project, you will explore the transmission of political attitudes within your own family. Because you are not concerned with surveying a random sample of U.S. adults but rather only members of your own family, you will be able to measure the political attitudes of your family members separately. To begin, select at least two political attitudes that you would like to explore. One of these should be party identification. The other could be an attitude toward a specific policy issue, such as health care, abortion, or spending on the military, or it could be an attitude toward government or elected officials, such as trust in the government. For examples of specific attitudes you might want to consider, examine the variables contained under Trust and Mass Support of the Political System or Respondent Ideology, Positions on Issues in the ANES Cumulative Datafile (accessible from the left side of the SDA Main Page). View the question wording for the attitudes you have selected. It is important that you use the same question wording for everyone that you survey, and it is also a good idea to use the wording that national survey organizations, such as the ANES, use. These wordings have been tested and validated, so we can be confident that they are reliable ways to measure the political attitude under study.

Once you have selected the attitudes you will measure and have noted the wording of the questions and the response options, answer the survey questions yourself. Then ask your parents to answer the questions. If possible and if desired, also ask other family members these questions. Since the goal of this assignment is to explore whether political attitudes are passed on from one generation to the next in your family, you could also collect data