Political Context and the Formation of Party Identification in the United States

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20th June 2021

Abstract

Party identification (PID) is a central concept for the explanation and prediction not only of electoral choices but also of issue attitudes and political perception. The traditional conception of PID attributes its formation mostly to citizens' primary socialisation by family and primary social groups. While it has often been debated in the literature whether PID really is an "unmoved mover" or subject to feedback effects from the political performance of party candidates or their issue positions, this discussion has usually focussed on the national level. We complement this perspective in two ways: first, by looking at feedback effects that originate at the level of individual US states, second, by looking at the socialisation effects of the partisanship of presidents and state governments. Using multilevel ordinal logit modelling applied to cumulated American Election Study data from 1958 to 1992, we show that even after controlling for parental PID and other predictors, the party not only of the US president but also of the governor of the state experienced during adolescence and early adulthood affects the formation of PID. Our results confirm the importance of social identity theory for a complete understanding of citizens' partisanship.

1   Introduction

Party identification[1] is an extremely if not "the most important concept in the study of political behavior" (Dalton, 2016, p. 1). The authors of *The American Voter,* Campbell et al. (1965), understand it as a long-term, psychological, affective identification with a political party which is not changed easily once it is established. In the United States of

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1   In this paper the terms party identification and partisanship are used interchangeably.

America (U.S.) party identification has become an important predictor of political behavior and attitudes since its influence on voting behavior was identified by Campbell et al. (See e.g. Bartels, 2000; Dancey & Goren, 2010; Gravelle, 2016; Klar, 2014). As it is such a relevant and important concept, it is necessary to understand how and under what circumstances individuals form such an identification. Campbell et al.'s (1965) approach for explaining the development of party identification understands it as a social identity that is shaped by socialization in one's immediate social milieu and especially one's family. Socialization agents typically include one's family and especially parents as well as civic education. Recently peers, media and political events have been considered as well. However, Neundorf and Smets (2017) have pointed out that "[t]he political context in which citizens grow up has often been overlooked as a socializing agent" (Neundorf & Smets, 2017, p. 9). This is where this work sets off.

Some scholars have taken a step towards integrating the political context into the research on partisanship: For example Erikson, MacKuen, and Stimson (2002) looked at political events at the macro level in the U.S., Beck and Jennings (1991) analyzed the effect of pressures of the time, and Sears and Valentino (1997) analyzed presidential campaigns in the U.S. Westholm and Niemi (1992), as well as Huber, Kernell, and Leoni (2005), looked at institutional factors at the comparative level and Elff and Meidert (2019) analyzed the influence of governing parties in Germany. The research of the present paper builds upon these works and analyzes the formation of party identification during one's political socialization process based on the social identity approach (Campbell et al., 1965; Green, Palmquist, & Schickler, 2002) and socialization theory (Neundorf & Smets, 2017; Stoker & Bass, 2011). These conceptions are expanded by not only examining the immediate social context but especially the political context as a socialization agent influencing one's bookshelf and thereby by drawing upon the papers mentioned above. Furthermore, this approach is combined with literature on candidate-centeredness of politics, building on findings by Wattenberg (2004) and Rapoport (1997) of long-term effects of presidential candidates on partisanship.

Combining these theoretical considerations, this paper analyzes the influence of incumbents at the state and federal level, i.e. governors and presidents, and their parties which have been experienced during one's late adolescence and early adulthood (ages 17 to 25) on the formation of citizens' party identification in the established democracy of the United States of America. Thus it is expected that, for example, it makes a difference

whether one was an adolescent and young adult in the 1930s and 1940s and experienced only Democratic presidents (Franklin D. Roosevelt and thereafter Harry S. Truman were in office from 1933 until 1953) or thereafter when the presidential party changed every four to eight years. Moreover, we expect different effects on party identification in different states, depending on the party of the state governor during one's formative years. For example, in Alabama only Democratic governors have been in office in the 20th century until Republicans also began to assume office from 1987 onwards. In other 'Confederate States' of the Political South, this clear shift from Democratic to Republican is also visible, e.g. in Mississippi in 1992 or in Georgia in 2003. In other states like California or Ohio the parties alternated. Based on these considerations, the following research question will be examined: *To what extent do the parties of state governors and presidents influence the formation of an individual's party identification during an individual's political socialization (between the ages of 17 and 25) in the United States of America?* To answer this question, individual American National Election Studies (ANES) data collected between 1958 and 1992 is analyzed in combination with aggregated data on governors and presidents and their parties in office between 1930 and 1992

This paper proceeds as follows: The next section introduces the theoretical background, the social identity approach on party identification and socialization theory, provides a review of previous research on the influence of political context on party identification, and derives the hypotheses of the paper. The third section introduces the two data sets (cross-section data from ANES and contextual data) used for the analyses. Thereafter, the results of multilevel ordinal logit analysis are presented, before this paper concludes with a discussion.

2 Theoretical Background and Literature Review

2.1 The Social Identity Approach of Party Identification and Socialization Theory

In this work, party identification is understood and applied in line with the social identity approach shaped by Campbell et al. (1965). According to them, party identification is a

long-term, psychological, affective attachment to a party rooted in early political socialization through one's immediate social environment and family. Socialization agents can be one's family and civic education, but also peers, media or political events. Work that is more recent than Campbell et al.'s confirms the role of the family as agent of socialization. For example, Jennings, Stoker, and Bowers (2009) find high levels of concordance between parents' and children's partisan orientations – similar to religiosity. "Children adopt parental partisan orientations more so than any other political characteristics" (Jennings et al., 2009, p. 796). Once adolescents mature, they detach from their family and spend less family time, while friends gain importance (Larson, Richards, Moneta, Holmbeck, & Duckett, 1996) and become relevant socialization agents together with school and the media. Furthermore, the political environment can be an agent of socialization (Neundorf & Smets, 2017; Stoker & Bass, 2011).

2.2   Political Context as Socialization Agent

In their analysis of the so-called macro-partisanship Green et al. (2002) find that the political mood of the time is reflected by party identification, in particular among young adults, who do not have a firm party identification yet: "The influences of the political environment are most noticeable among new voters, whose partisan attachments often bear the stamp of the political Zeitgeist that prevailed when they reached voting age" (Green et al., 2002, pp. 107–108). This implies that not only the social context but also the political environment, like the latest president, can have an influence on the formation of party identification during one's political socialization. Campbell et al. (1965) also link the political environment to the formation of party identification of young voters. They find that the Great Depression turned a large part of the young voters towards the Democratic Party and thereby gave it "a hold on that generation, which it has never fully relinquished" (Campbell et al., 1965, p. 155). They hypothesize that "new voters are always more likely to be moved by the prevailing political tides because they have not as yet developed stable party attachments" (Campbell et al., 1965, p. 156). The fact that the political context plays a role in the formation of party identification has also been taken into account in the rational choice approach (Fiorina, 1981): Individuals update their party identification continuously throughout adulthood based on the retrospective evaluation party performance like a running-tally (Fiorina, 1981).

Some research has been conducted explicitly connecting the political context with the social context in order to explain the formation of party identification during socialization. This includes works of Erikson et al. (2002), Beck and Jennings (1991), Westholm and Niemi (1992), Huber et al. (2005), Sears and Valentino (1997) as well as Elff and Meidert (2019). Erikson et al. (2002) show how impressions of events at the political macro level, such as political or economic crises, have lasting effects on young people. Beck and Jennings (1991) include the political period when people first entered the electorate in their analysis of the development of partisan orientations in the U.S. and find that the partisan legacy of parents was strong, but it was eroded by post-1965 antipartisan pressures. They therefore conclude that "[t]hese patterns of partisan change demonstrate how the traditional influence of parent socialization can be modified in face of a powerful competing Zeitgeist at a critical point in the life cycle" (Beck & Jennings, 1991, p. 757). Westholm and Niemi (1992) find that in addition to political events, institutional factors such as characteristics of the party system can also influence the development of party identification. Huber et al. (2005) argue that family socialization is to be assumed initially, but the political context can support and reinforce this process.

2.3 The Impressionable Years

Elff and Meidert (2019) analyze the influence of the political context on party identification in Germany during one's formative phase by looking at the effect of government participation of parties at the federal and state level. For the federal level, their results show that it is not earlier phases of life in which a party's government participation has consequences for party identification, but the phase after being 25 years old. Nevertheless, at the state level, they find an influence of the political context experienced between the ages of 17 and 25. Sears and Valentino (1997) incorporate the external political environment into their analysis of the origins of party identification in the U.S. by looking at the influence of presidential campaigns. Based on a panel-study, they find socialization gains for preadults (aged 10 to 17) in the campaign's most salient domains, i.e. the two political parties and the major candidates, but not so much in less visible domain attitudes, and mostly during the campaign (not in the post-campaign period). A gap in party identification between children and adults that existed before the campaign was reduced through the campaign. The findings of Sears and Valentino (1997) show that political events can have an influence on the formation of party identification and are thereby an

agent of socialization if they are salient. This is even more true for young people with less experience. Schuman and Scott (1989) as well as Schuman and Rodgers (2004) find that important events (like World War II, the Vietnam War or the assassination of John F. Kennedy or for the latter 9/11) are especially remembered by those who experienced the specific event during their adolescence and early adulthood, i.e. their teens and early twenties (Schuman & Scott, 1989) or in the 'critical ages' defined as the ages 12 to 29 (Schuman & Rodgers, 2004). National and world events experienced during this critical period have a strong impact on one's memory because, firstly, one experienced the event personally, and secondly, during this age events have – unlike events experienced later onwards in one's life – a uniqueness as one experiences something like this for the first time and therefore have a stronger impact (Schuman & Rodgers, 2004). According to the 'impressionable-years hypothesis', the period of late adolescence and early adulthood is a period of openness to changes in political attitudes that have been acquired earlier. Afterwards, however, one is less open to change and party identification might become stronger and thereby more stable over time (Osborne, Sears, & Valentino, 2011). Osborne et al. (2011) argue that "exposure to highly salient political events during the impressionable years can socialize partisan attitudes that are unique to that period and to that cohort. Late adolescents are more responsive to such events than are fully mature adults" (Osborne et al., 2011, p. 87).

Much of the Socialization literature regards the phase between late adolescence (or late teens) and young adulthood (or mid- to late twenties) as the most formative for the socialization process (e.g. Neundorf & Smets, 2017; Sears & Brown, 2013). These formative years "are generally believed to be a crucial period during which citizens form the basis of political attitudes and behaviors" (Neundorf & Smets, 2017, p. 3) and this period is "key to the development of the political self" (Stoker & Bass, 2011, p. 456). Not only are events from this period remembered the most (as Schuman & Rodgers, 2004; Schuman & Scott, 1989, have shown) but young adulthood is also a period of learning and development. It includes many new and changing life experiences e.g. being eligible to vote for the first time, moving or getting married and is thus "a period of great political flux" (Stoker & Bass, 2011, p. 458). Therefore, it is expected that the political context affects the formation of party identification during the impressionable years between the ages of 17 and 25.

2.4   Candidate-Centered Politics and Political Socialization

The President is a central figure of the U.S. political system, thus presidential elections, and their preceding campaigns are highly salient events. As Sears and Valentino (1997) show, the campaign for the highest executive office of the U.S. induced socialization gains on adolescents regarding the candidates and parties which were its central objects. Each of the 50 states of the U.S. also has its own chief executive officer, the governor. As American politics are or have become highly candidate-centered, presidents and governments (as successful candidates) may also have an impact on the formation of party identification, in particular during late adolescence and early adulthood.

Whereas campaigns used to be party-dominated and labor-intensive, they have become candidate-centered and technology-intensive in the 1960s. Through e.g. television, candidates can directly communicate with voters and do not have to rely on party workers to represent them (Campbell, 2007). Additionally, candidates are mentioned more often during election campaigns than their respective parties – with increasing tendencies. For each mention of the party in 1952, the candidate was mentioned 1.7 times. Until 1996 this increased to 5.6 candidate mentions per party mention (McAllister, 2009). Furthermore, presidential candidates have become very "dominant figures on the political scene" in post-1980 American politics. Thereby, political parties are "seen by the public in the framework of the leader" (Wattenberg, 2004, p. 154). Rapoport (1997) calls presidential candidates "the most prominent party representative[s] to the American public" (Rapoport, 1997, p. 187). According to McAllister (2009), "[i]t is now commonplace for governments to be named after their leader, rather than after the party that holds office [...]. This phenomenon is often traced to the election of Margaret Thatcher in Britain in 1979 and Ronald Reagan in the United States in 1980, two strong, charismatic leaders whose profile within the electorate easily eclipsed that of their respective parties" (McAllister, 2009, p. 571). Garzia (2014) points out that the extent to which voters base their voting decision on a candidate's personal profile depends to a large extent on the institutional and political structure in which the election is held: Through presidential elections (like in the U.S.) a focus on personalities is more encouraged than through parliamentary elections. In presidential systems, the executive authority "resides with an individual who is elected to the position for a fixed period of time" (McAllister, 2009, p. 575). Therefore, candidates and party leaders matter in the U.S.

Regarding party identification, there has been evidence that not only the glasses of partisanship shape candidate evaluations but that attitudes towards candidates can also influence party identification. Based on an analysis of the 1972 and 1976 U.S. presidential elections, Page and Jones (1979) find that party loyalties are not only "fixed determinants of the vote; those loyalties can themselves be affected by attitudes toward the current candidates" (Page & Jones, 1979, p. 1088). Analyzing three parliamentary systems, Garzia (2014) finds that evaluations of party leaders have a growing effect on party identification. In a working paper on long-term partisan presidential voting preferences in the U.S., Ghitza and Gelman (2014) find that these are formed as a running-tally of presidential evaluations, yet particularly among individuals of age between 14 and 24. Rapoport (1997) finds that attitudes toward (winning and also losing) 1972 U.S. presidential candidates had short and long-term effects on the party identification of an individual. He suggests that candidates help voters to make inferences about parties and thereby influence their party identification. Images and views of candidates are more tangible than a party and the voters can make inferences of the candidate's party from the issues, ideologies, personal characteristics and active followers of a candidate. Furthermore, "[p]arty images exist prior to the campaign and are not created de novo in each campaign (after all, partisanship is relatively stable). Current party images are the starting point from which new campaigns begin. As new candidates represent the party in subsequent elections, each has to overcome, or be able to take advantage of, the previous nominee" (Rapoport, 1997, p. 188). It therefore can be argued that the influence of candidates experienced during the impressionable years could have a lasting impact on party identification. In fact Rapoport concludes that: "At the very least, it appears that the partisanship of individuals in early adulthood is subject to influences by the types of presidential candidate they encounter which persist beyond the effect of vote preference" (Rapoport, 1997, pp. 197–198).

2.5 Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior and Self-Categorization Theory

For a politician to influence party identification he or she needs to be noticed by citizens associated with a social group, i.e. his or her political party and its partisans. This argument is based on the self-categorization theory, according to which the assignment to a social group can only take place if it is salient (Huddy, 2001). Candidates in a campaign

are visible to all citizens and they can be clearly attached to their political party. Furthermore, Tajfel and Turner (2004) point out in their *Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior* that being a member of a group allows individuals to identify themselves in social terms which is mostly done through comparing one's (in-)group to other (out-)groups. Individuals want to have a positive social identity. This is largely achieved by being a member of a group that is perceived as more positive than other groups (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). Social identity processes are guided by reducing uncertainty and by self-enhancement; groups strive not only to be comparatively distinct but also better (Hogg, Abrams, Otten, & Hinkle, 2004). Therefore, comparing salient social groups is aimed at creating a positive distinctiveness between one's group and other groups and thereby at receiving an "evaluatively positive ingroup distinctiveness" (Hogg et al., 2004, p. 258) or put differently at being superior over an out-group (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). "Fully reciprocal competition between groups requires a situation of mutual comparison and differentiation on a shared value dimension" (Tajfel & Turner, 2004, p. 284). Linking this to the context of political parties and party identification, it can be argued that elections are a means of comparing parties and parties who win an election and thereby hold office are perceived as more positive than those who lose an election. The winner and the winning party are perceived as superior to the losers. Therefore, individuals want to be members of the superior group, i.e. identify with the superior party. Green et al. (2002) have pointed out that their social identification approach differs from this social identity theory as not the drive to achieve positive self-esteem leads to the formation or adjustment of party identification. Party identification is stable and if voters were self-esteem seeking they "would climb aboard the victorious party's bandwagon after a landslide victory" (Green et al., 2002, p. 11).

2.6   Hypotheses

Both the literature based on the social identity theory of party identification (Campbell et al., 1965; Green et al., 2002) and on socialization theory (Neundorf & Smets, 2017; Stoker & Bass, 2011) suggest that party identification is formed during one's political socialization. Not only the social but also the political context, e.g. events like presidential campaigns can have an influence, too. This process takes place during the impressionable years (ages 17 to 25). As Sears and Valentino (1997) have outlined, preadults have less

prior political experience and presidential campaigns are important socializing opportunities for them. Events during this period have a uniqueness (Schuman & Rodgers, 2004) and stable partisanships have not been developed yet (Campbell et al., 1965). Moreover, politics have become candidate-centered, political parties are seen based on their candidates or political leaders (Wattenberg, 2004). Combining this with social categorization theory (Huddy, 2001) and social identity theory of intergroup behavior (Hogg et al., 2004; Tajfel & Turner, 2004), it is argued that incumbents who prevailed and got elected and are thereby salient and are perceived as superior have an influence on late adolescents and young adults. These individuals link the incumbents' image or performance to the incumbents' respective party. Thereby, it is influenced which party the individuals identify with (in the long-term). In the United States' presidential system, the president as chief executive officer is the highest possible office. This line of reasoning leads to the following hypothesis:

> *H1: If the President of the United States is from a certain party during one's impressionable years (age 17 to 25), then the probability of a (later) identification with this party increases.*

However, besides the chief-executive officer of the entire U.S., each of the 50 states has a governor of its own which could influence partisanship as well:

> *H2: If the governor of the state where one resided during one's impressionable years (age 17 to 25) is from a certain party, then the probability of a (later) identification with this party increases.*

3 Data and Measurement

Individual data used in this paper come from the ANES (2019c) Time Series Cumulative Data File (1948-2016) which includes information about respondents' party identification, age, and the state where one grew up and lived during the interview. The contextual data on the governors in all 50 U.S. states and their party affiliation have been collected manually from various sources, including the National Governors Association, Ballotpedia (n.y.), and Wikipedia. Similar data on presidents have been collected from The

White House, the US House of Representatives and partly also Wikipedia (2019). Governors and presidents are coded as either Democratic, Republican or Independent/Other. If more than one governor or president was in office in any particular year, the one who held it for the longer period in that year is coded as being governor or president.

The conventional measure of party identification available from ANES data is based on responses to two related questions.

> "Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?
>
> (IF REPUBLICAN OR DEMOCRAT) Would you call yourself a strong (REP/DEM) or a not very strong (REP/DEM)?
>
> (IF INDEPENDENT, OTHER [1966 AND LATER: OR NO PREFERENCE; 2008: OR DK) Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic party?" (ANES, 2019b, p. 110)

The responses to these questions are usually combined into a single 7-point party identification scale – from "Strong Democrat" (1) to "Strong Republican" (7). Because we view party identification as categorical, we only use the responses to the first question.[2]

Since we are interested in the effect of the parties of the governors and presidents experienced during the impressionable years, we calculate the time shares of each party holding the office of governor or president respectively between each respondent's ages of 17 and 25. This leads to five independent variables: share of Democratic governors, share of Republican governors, share of Independent/Other governors as well as share of Democratic presidents and share of Republican presidents (as presidents have only been from these two parties since 1930).

Unfortunately, the ANES data does not include information on where the respondent lived between the ages of 17 and 25. However, data on where the respondent grew up and where he or she lived during the interview is available; so the share of governors is only

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2   Data sets for 1952-1966 and 1970 do not include data on the responses to the two questions, but only on the summary measure constructed from them. We reconstruct the responses to the first question by recoding the values of the 7-point summary scale.

calculated for those respondents who lived in the same state during the interview in which they grew up.

To construct the 'governor share' of each party for each respondent, we count the years of age between 17 and 25 the respondent grew up with a Democrat, with a Republican, or with an independent governor, dividing this sum by the total number of years, i.e. by nine. In the same way we calculate the 'presidential share' of each party for each respondent. For each respondent, the 'president share' of every party was calculated in the same way just without consideration of the state.

Further variables from the ANES data set are included as control variables. These include the party identification of the respondent's mother and father which the responded recalled, the respondent's age during the interview and his or her highest level of education. Additionally, we control for the respondent's religious denomination, occupation, union membership in the household as well as gender and race. The selection of these control variables is mainly based on Campbell et al. (1965) and also on Green et al. (2002). Parental party identification represents parents as socialization agents based on the social identity approach from which this work set off. As not all respondents were asked at their 26th birthday, i.e. directly after the age period under observation, age is controlled for. Including age also takes life cycle effects into account, i.e. changes associated with getting older and especially the intensification of party identification (Campbell et al., 1965): "The longer a person thinks of himself as belonging to a party, the stronger his [*sic*] sense of loyalty to it will become" (Campbell et al., 1965, p. 163). Moreover, "[o]lder people have had more time to accumulate tenure in their party association, even those who in their earlier years moved from one party to the other" (Campbell et al., 1965, p. 165). The level of education is controlled for in order to take into account the effect of cognitive mobilization postulated by Dalton (1984) according to which those who are better educated (and politically involved) have more political skills and resources and can thereby be "functionally independent of party cues" (Dalton, 1984, p. 281). This mobilization should be higher among the youth.

In our analyses we estimate cumulative logit models with state-level random effects, where the dependent variable party identification is treated as ordinal with categories "Democrat", over "Independent" to "Republican". Estimates are computed with the *R* function `clmm()` from the package *ordinal* (Christensen 2019).

At first, only the independent variables are added and in a stepwise process, control variables are added. After having estimated models with control variables, predictive margins (as applied by Elff & Meidert, 2019; also known as 'observed value' approach, Hanmer & Ozan Kalkan, 2013) as well as the direction and p-values of regression coefficients will be interpreted in order to test the hypotheses. Predictive Margins represent the values that the average probability of identifying with a party takes in the sample if the independent variable in question takes a certain value for all respondents but all other variables retain their observed values (Elff & Meidert, 2019). Hanmer and Ozan Kalkan (2013) differentiate between the 'average case' and the 'observed value' approach. For both, the selected independent variable is set to a range of or to all its values. However, they differ regarding the values for the other independent or control variables. For the 'average case' approach, at least one example case is created by setting all other explanatory variables to a specific value like their sample mean or mode respectively. Marginal effects or predicted probabilities are calculated for this specific case. For the 'observed value' approach, the explanatory variables are kept at the values which have been observed for each respondent. Marginal effects or predicted probabilities are calculated for each case. Afterward, the average over all the cases is taken. As this analysis is aimed at receiving "an estimate of the average effect in the population" and not at understanding "the effect for the average case" (Hanmer & Ozan Kalkan, 2013, p. 268), the 'observed value' approach is chosen.

Predictive margins are not only constructed for independent variables, but it is reasonable to construct them for control variables as well in order to be able to compare effects (Elff & Meidert, 2019). In detail, the following steps are performed based on Elff and Meidert (2019) to construct the predictive margins. To receive the predictive margins, first, values are selected for the specific independent or control variable of interest. For example, for any incumbent party's time share during the nine impressionable years, all ten possible values (0, 1/9, 2/9, 3/9, 4/9, 5/9, 6/9, 7/9, 8/9 and 1) are selected. Second, for all 5,648 respondents, the value of the variable of interest is set to all these chosen values step by step (while keeping all other variables at their respondent specific value). Third, the cumulative link mixed model with control variables which will have been estimated before from the sample data is used to generate predictions for the dependent variable, i.e. the probability of identifying as Democrat, Independent or Republican, for each sample unit and each of the (ten) fixed values of the independent/control variable. In a final step, the

sample mean of these model predictions is calculated for each of the fixed values of the independent/control variable. These average model predictions express how the values of the independent or control variable affect the marginal distribution of the dependent variable, i.e. the values of the dependent variable for an "average" member of the sample or the average values of the dependent variable for the total sample. All this is done via `predmarg()` from the *mpred* package by Elff (2020a).
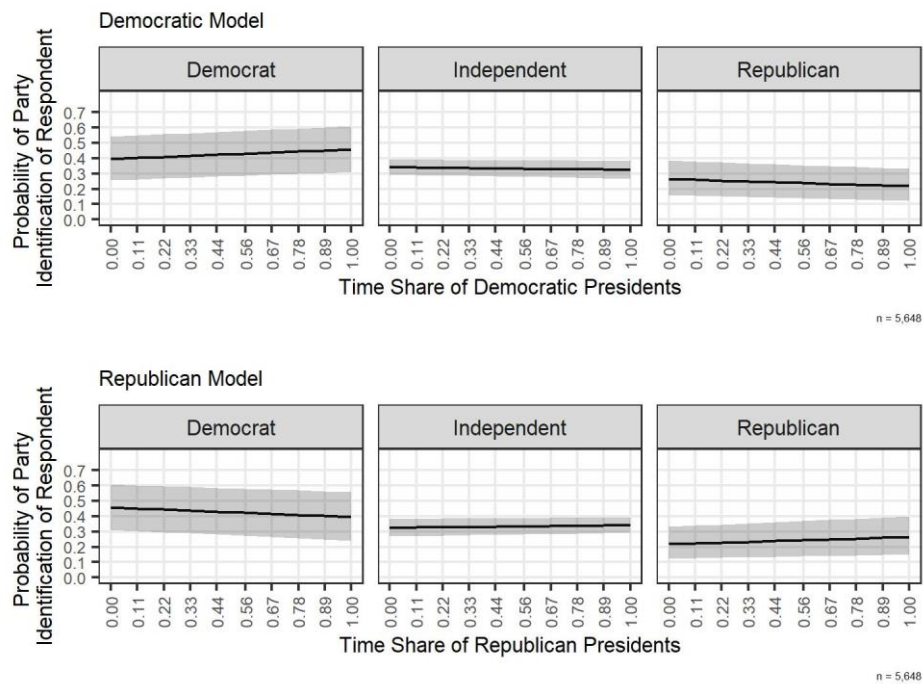
For robustness checks, cumulative link models (CLM) with fixed state effects are estimated (via `clm()` in R from the *ordinal* package by Christensen (2019)). Moreover, multinomial logit models with random and fixed state effects respectively are estimated via `mblogit()` from the *mclogit* package (Elff, 2020b). Therein, party identification is used as nominal with three possible values ("Democrat", "Independent", "Republican").

4   Analyses and Results

To analyze the effect of the political context, cumulative link mixed models with random state effects are used. There are two variants of models, the "Democratic models" are based on a model that contains only the time share of Democratic governors and presidents, which is then stepwise extended by control variables, while the "Republican models" are based on a model that contains only the time share of Democratic governors and presidents. Because of the multicollinearity of Democratic and Republican time shares, it is impossible to include both Democratic and Republican time shares. Since the discussion of the coefficients is difficult due to the complexity of the model, we focus on predictive margins for the interpretation of the results.

Predictive margins allow to assess whether the effects of independent variables relevant to the hypotheses point in the postulated direction. To interpret the strength of the effects, comparisons with the effects of other variables are conducted. Explanatory variables of interest are the share of Democratic presidents and the share of Democratic governors. Additionally, the effects of shares of Republican presidents and governors from the 'Republican model' are also illustrated. Furthermore, predictive margins for the parents' party identification and the respondents' age are calculated in order to be able to compare the effects.

Figure 1: Influence of the Time Share of Democratic and Republican Presidents on the Respondents' Party Identification (Source: ANES, 2019c, and own compilation of context data).

Hypothesis 1 states that one is more likely to identify with a certain party if the U.S. President has been from that party during one's impressionable years. The empirical implication of this hypothesis is that the probability of identifying with a party (ceteris paribus) increases with the time share that the president came from that party during one's impressionable years. Figure 1 shows the predictive margins for the shares of presidents. The share of Democratic presidents increases the probability of identifying with the Democratic Party as expected, whereas it decreases the probabilities of identifying as Republican or Independent. However, the latter effect is only slight.

Looking at the influence of the share of Republican presidents (instead of the Democratic ones) in the 'Republican model', the predictive margins (also in Figure 1) show an exact mirror image: Correspondingly to the model with the share of Democratic presidents and
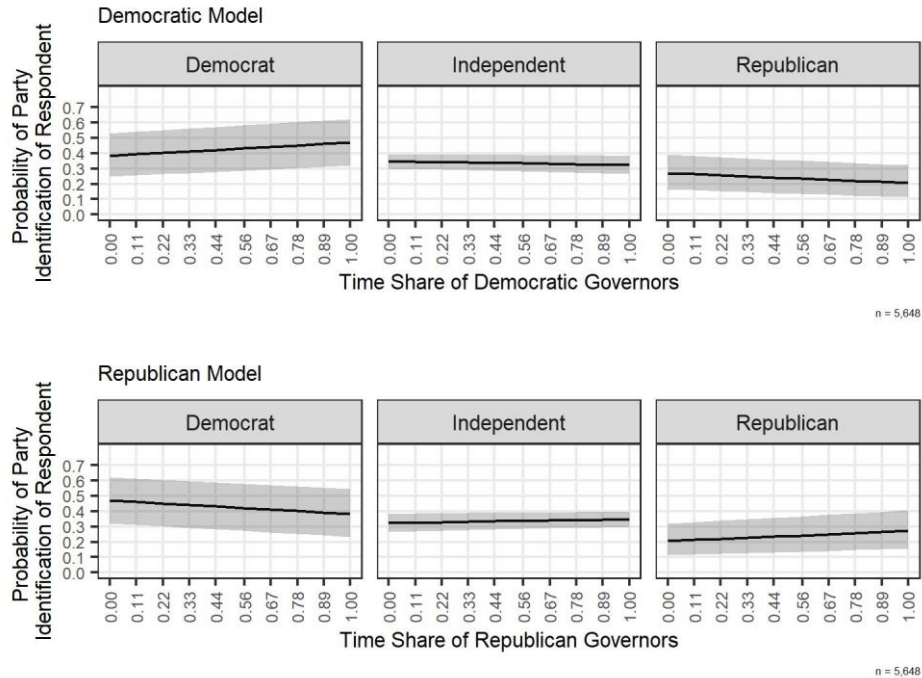
contrary to the negative effect of the share of Democratic presidents, the share of Republican presidents has a positive effect when moving from "Democrat" to "Republican". This is logical since – as mentioned above – only presidents from these two parties were in office and thereby one year of Democratic rule increases the share of Democratic presidents and at the same time decreases the Republican share.

For robustness checks more models have been estimated. The multinomial logit models with random state effects show a positive effect of the share of Democratic presidents on the probability of identifying as Democrat compared to Independent ($p < 0.001$). Moreover, with Democrat as baseline, the coefficients for the probabilities of identifying as Republican or Independent (compared to Democrat) are as expected negative ($p < 0.01$ and $p < 0.001$). The same is true for a multinomial logit model with fixed instead of random state effects. In the cumulative link model with fixed state effects, the effect of the share of Democratic presidents is negative as expected. Thereby, these models confirm our findings.

Coming back to the hypothesis, the results show the shares of Democratic or Republican presidents have an effect on party identification. Furthermore, this effect is in the expected directions. Hypothesis 1 can, therefore, be confirmed. Having experienced a Democratic or Republican president during the impressionable years increases the probability of identifying with the respective party. No other or Independent presidents were in office during the period under observation.

Hypothesis 2 concerns the incumbents at state level. According to it having experienced a governor from a certain party in the state where one resided during one's impressionable years (age 17 to 25), increases the probability of a (later) identification with this party. The predictive margins (Figure 2) look very similar to the presidential ones (Figure 1). As expected, the share of Democratic governors increases the probability of identifying as Democrat. This is also true for the share of Republican governors and the probability of identifying as Republican. The graphs for the probabilities of identifying with Independent again show in the same direction as the graph for the probability of identifying as Republican, but with a smaller slope.

Figure 2: Influence of the Time Share of Democratic and Republican Governors on the Respondents' Party Identification with all Control Variable (Source: ANES, 2019c, and own compilation of context data).

These effects can also be seen by looking at the regression coefficients. The Democratic model shows a negative effect of the share of Democratic governors when moving from "Democratic" to "Independent" to "Republican" ($p < 0.001$). And the other way round in the Republican model a positive effect can be seen. The same is true for Democratic cumulative link model with fixed state effects. Moreover, the multinomial logit models with fixed and random state effects respectively again confirm these findings.

5   Discussion

This work has shed light on the formation of party identification during adolescence and early adulthood in the United States of America. Coming from the social identity approach (Campbell et al., 1965) and socialization literature (e.g. Neundorf & Smets, 2017) the influence of the political context as a socialization agent has been analyzed. In detail, it has been argued that incumbents' parties have an influence on the formation of party identification. It was distinguished between the national and the state level, i.e. the U.S. President and governors. Further, it has been assumed that they have an impact on the formation of party identification during the so-called impressionable years, between the ages of 17 and 25. Therefore, the analysis was led by the following research question: *To what extent do the parties of state governors and presidents influence the formation of an individual's party identification during an individual's political socialization (between the ages of 17 and 25) in the United States of America?* Accordingly, hypotheses have been formulated with regard to the party membership of the U.S. President and the state governors.

The first hypothesis states that one is more likely to identify with a party if the U.S. President has been from that party during one's impressionable years. The results support this hypothesis. The second hypothesis postulates that if a governor from a certain party is experienced during one's impressionable years in the state where lives during that time, the probability of identifying with that party increases.

One limitation of this work is that the in H1 postulated presidential effect cannot work for Independent party identification as there were no Independent presidents in office. However, the second most respondents (29.1%) identified themselves as Independent.

Furthermore, the validity of the measurement of the state in which the respondent lived during the impressionable years might pose a problem. The ANES data set did not include data on in which state the respondents lived during the impressionable years. This was addressed by selecting only those respondents who, during the interview, lived in the same state they grew up in. However, especially in this young, active phase between 17 and 25, respondents might have moved to another state, e.g. to go to College, and only moved back afterward. Thereby, the wrong governors and parties might have been attached to these individuals within the analysis. For the latter part of the period under

observation (1986-1992), about one in five first-time college freshmen who had finished high school in the last twelve months moved to a different state for college ("Trends and Patterns in Interstate Migration of College Freshman," 1996). While this is not the majority, it is further not clear which of these moved back afterward (and thereby got the wrong governor share attached to them in this analysis) or not (and were thereby excluded from this research). Of course, other causes for having lived in another state during the impressionable years than where one grew up and lived during the interview are possible. Fortunately, the state does not influence which presidents have been experienced.

There are a few questions opened up by the results in this paper. It remains to be seen to what extent opposing parties in the office of president and governor during the impressionable years, for example, the simultaneous experience of a Republican president and a Democratic governor, affect the socialization process and the development of party identification. Furthermore, the person and the personality of the different incumbents might play a major role as well[3]. Former research by Green et al. (2002) has shown that whereas Democrat James E. Carter and Republican Richard M. Nixon repelled partisan identifiers in 1980 and 1974 respectively, Democrat Lyndon B. Johnson (1964) and Republican Ronald W. Reagan (1984) recruited them. However, "[e]ven presidents who are markedly more or less popular than the norm produce no more than gradual change in party attachments – unless something about their presidency fundamentally alters the social imagery associated with the parties" (Green et al., 2002, p. 108). This aspect could be dealt with in further research. Moreover, after a data collection on e.g. governors' approval rates, the influence of governors as persons and not only their party affiliation could be analyzed. It also remains an open question, whether the length of the incumbency – on the one hand of specific incumbents and on the other hand of parties – has an effect and if so, which one?

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3 An additional analysis has been run which included a dummy variable for each president in office between 1930 and 1992 indicating whether each respondent experienced this president during his or her impressionable years (1) or not (0). However, the fit of the model was not significantly better than without these dummies (LR = 40.1, df = 30, p = 0.1). The independent variables did not have an effect anymore.

The period during which incumbents' parties were assumed to have an effect on the formation of an individual's party identification and during which an effect of the presidential party on the probability of identifying with that party has been found are the so-called impressionable years. Further research should examine the influences during this period in more detail. It covers nine years from when one is 17 to when one is 25. Since the 22nd Amendment of 1951, U.S. Presidents can be elected to a maximum of two terms, i.e. eight years (under certain conditions ten years). Thereby, the nine-year period normally includes at least two presidential elections and three (partial) terms. If one assumes full terms, then (apart from Franklin D. Roosevelt) there are at normally least two if not three presidents that one experiences during this period. Based on Schuman and Rodgers (2004) and Sears and Valentino (1997) it was argued that the party that wins the election and assumes office has an influence on party identification as experiencing this consciously for the first time is characterized by uniqueness. However, as this nine-year period is quite long, it could be that the uniqueness and with it the effect on party identification subsides within this period. In this analysis, the time component has not been considered and the weighting for each of the nine years was identical when calculating the independent variables. Further research should analyze a possible decline in the influence during these nine years in more detail. Additionally, the respondents were aged between 26 and 79, i.e. some had just left the impressionable years behind, others had experienced many more things. It seems plausible that the effect of the incumbents' parties is different for younger and older people, that the further back political socialization has taken place, the less powerful its influence will be. This also remains an open question for further research e.g. based on panel or cohort studies.

It further remains an open question whether the results can also be transferred to other periods of time or just represent a snapshot. In the South, from the 1960s onwards, a political realignment took place away from the Democrats towards the Republicans. This work cannot sufficiently illustrate this phenomenon; an analysis over a longer period of time to the present day would make this possible. Furthermore, candidate-centeredness began in the second half of the 19th century. This work analyzed part of this trend by looking at the political context between 1930 and 1992. However, it could be that since then candidates were noticed even stronger and were more visible. This could increase their effect on party identification. The ANES data covers a longer period, however, data on the parents' party identification is only available for these selected years but is crucial

in order to control for the social context as socialization agent as has been seen in the analysis. Therefore, analyses over a longer period of time and surveys covering the parents' party identification and information on where citizens lived during different age periods over many years would help to shed more light on this effect – especially looking at the Southern realignment and the fairly new trend of candidate-centeredness.

By having shown that having experienced a Republican or Democratic president during one's impressionable years, increases the probability of identifying as Republican (relative to Democrat) and Democrat (relative to Independent) respectively, this work has laid a foundation for the expansion of the social identity approach regarding incumbents and their parties. Further research should start of from here and analyze the aforementioned extensions in order to get to the bottom of this effect.

6 References

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Table 1: Mixed cumulative logit model estimates – Democratic variant

	Share of Democratic Presidents	Share of Democratic Governors	Age	Education	Age & Education	Gender & Race	Religion, Occupation & Union Membership	Years of Interview Nested in States	Party Identification of Parents
Share of Democratic Presidents	-0.344***	-0.343***	-0.283***	-0.211***	-0.161**	-0.324***	-0.337***	-0.316***	-0.329**
	(0.048)	(0.048)	(0.052)	(0.049)	(0.053)	(0.055)	(0.061)	(0.064)	(0.104)
Share of Democratic Governors		-0.218***	-0.203***	-0.173**	-0.160**	-0.221***	-0.219***	-0.203**	-0.469***
		(0.054)	(0.055)	(0.055)	(0.055)	(0.055)	(0.062)	(0.063)	(0.095)
Age			-0.004**		-0.003*	-0.002	-0.003	-0.004*	0.005
			(0.001)		(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.003)
Highest Level of Education: High school vs. Grade school or less (0-8 grades)				0.154**	0.142**	0.108	0.110	0.108	0.227*
				(0.054)	(0.054)	(0.056)	(0.061)	(0.061)	(0.097)
Highest Level of Education: Some college vs. Grade school or less (0-8 grades)				0.463***	0.451***	0.420***	0.407***	0.407***	0.588***
				(0.062)	(0.062)	(0.063)	(0.071)	(0.072)	(0.116)
Highest Level of Education: College or advanced degree vs. Grade school or less (0-8 grades)				0.686***	0.675***	0.562***	0.540***	0.534***	0.604***
				(0.064)	(0.065)	(0.066)	(0.078)	(0.079)	(0.127)
Gender: Female vs. Male						-0.124***	-0.226***	-0.229***	-0.242***
						(0.031)	(0.039)	(0.040)	(0.067)
Race: Black non-Hispanic vs. White non-Hispanic						-1.338***	-1.356***	-1.383***	-1.231***
						(0.056)	(0.066)	(0.067)	(0.124)
Race: Other vs. White non-Hispanic						-0.615***	-0.388***	-0.445***	-0.256
						(0.069)	(0.083)	(0.086)	(0.176)
Religion: Catholic vs. Protestant							-0.769***	-0.778***	-0.435***
							(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.071)
Religion: Jewish vs. Protestant							-1.548***	-1.595***	-0.988***
							(0.123)	(0.124)	(0.186)
Religion: Other/none vs. Protestant							-0.335***	-0.342***	-0.309**
							(0.060)	(0.061)	(0.113)
Occupation: Clerical and sales workers vs. Professional and managerial							0.072	0.070	0.128
							(0.056)	(0.056)	(0.095)
Occupation: Skilled, semi-skilled and service workers vs. Professional and managerial							-0.132*	-0.136*	-0.136
							(0.052)	(0.053)	(0.086)
Occupation: Laborers, except farm vs. Professional and managerial							-0.085	-0.087	-0.371
							(0.114)	(0.115)	(0.199)
Occupation: Farmers, farm managers, farm laborers and foremen vs. Professional and managerial							0.118	0.107	-0.168
							(0.111)	(0.112)	(0.179)
Occupation: Homemakers vs. Professional and managerial							0.144*	0.144*	0.226*
							(0.062)	(0.062)	(0.100)
Union Membership in Household: No vs. Yes							0.541***	0.543***	0.449***
							(0.040)	(0.041)	(0.064)
Party Identification of Father: Democrat vs. Independent/Other									-0.541***
									(0.108)
Party Identification of Father: Republican vs. Independent/Other									0.708***
									(0.122)
Party Identification of Mother: Democrat vs. Independent/Other									-0.669***
									(0.101)
Party Identification of Mother: Republican vs. Independent/Other									0.623***
									(0.116)
Democrat|Independent/None/Other	-0.534***	-0.660***	-0.772***	-0.279**	-0.387***	-0.768***	-0.685***	-0.695***	-0.752***
	(0.074)	(0.076)	(0.086)	(0.093)	(0.103)	(0.100)	(0.130)	(0.132)	(0.200)
Independent/None/Other|Republican	1.051***	0.925***	0.814***	1.324***	1.216***	0.885***	1.016***	1.027***	1.262***
	(0.074)	(0.076)	(0.086)	(0.093)	(0.104)	(0.100)	(0.130)	(0.132)	(0.201)
Var(~1|State)	0.183	0.154	0.156	0.143	0.145	0.086	0.157	0.158	0.041
Var(~1|Year of Interview x State)								0.063	0.061
Log-likelihood	-16313.820	-16305.823	-16301.883	-16128.365	-16125.487	-15718.470	-13387.207	-13370.578	-4948.497
N	15484	15484	15484	15414	15414	15357	13326	13326	5648

Significance: *** = $p < 0.001$; ** = $p < 0.01$; * = $p < 0.05$

Table 2: Mixed cumulative logit model estimates – Republican variant

	Share of Republican Presidents	Share of Republican Governors	Age	Education	Age & Education	Gender & Race	Religion, Occupation & Union Membership	Years of Interview Nested in States	Party Identification of Parents
Share of Republican Presidents	0.344***	0.340***	0.281***	0.209***	0.160**	0.322***	0.335***	0.315***	0.328**
	(0.048)	(0.048)	(0.052)	(0.049)	(0.053)	(0.055)	(0.061)	(0.064)	(0.103)
Share of Republican Governors		0.216***	0.199***	0.168**	0.154**	0.216***	0.218***	0.201**	0.478***
		(0.055)	(0.055)	(0.055)	(0.055)	(0.055)	(0.062)	(0.064)	(0.096)
Age			-0.004**		-0.003*	-0.002	-0.003	-0.003*	0.005
			(0.001)		(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.003)
Highest Level of Education: High school vs. Grade school or less (0-8 grades)				0.154**	0.142**	0.108	0.109	0.108	0.227*
				(0.054)	(0.056)	(0.056)	(0.061)	(0.061)	(0.097)
Highest Level of Education: Some college vs. Grade school or less (0-8 grades)				0.463***	0.451***	0.420***	0.407***	0.407***	0.589***
				(0.062)	(0.062)	(0.063)	(0.071)	(0.072)	(0.116)
Highest Level of Education: College or advanced degree vs. Grade school or less (0-8 grades)				0.685***	0.675***	0.562***	0.539***	0.533***	0.606***
				(0.064)	(0.065)	(0.066)	(0.078)	(0.079)	(0.127)
Gender: Female vs. Male						-0.123***	-0.226***	-0.229***	-0.242***
						(0.031)	(0.039)	(0.040)	(0.067)
Race: Black non-Hispanic vs. White non-Hispanic						-1.337***	-1.356***	-1.383***	-1.232***
						(0.056)	(0.066)	(0.067)	(0.124)
Race: Other vs. White non-Hispanic						-0.615***	-0.387***	-0.445***	-0.256
						(0.069)	(0.083)	(0.086)	(0.176)
Religion: Catholic vs. Protestant							-0.770***	-0.778***	-0.435***
							(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.071)
Religion: Jewish vs. Protestant							-1.548***	-1.595***	-0.987***
							(0.123)	(0.124)	(0.186)
Religion: Other/none vs. Protestant							-0.335***	-0.341***	-0.308**
							(0.060)	(0.061)	(0.113)
Occupation: Clerical and sales workers vs. Professional and managerial							0.072	0.070	0.129
							(0.056)	(0.056)	(0.095)
Occupation: Skilled, semi-skilled and service workers vs. Professional and managerial							-0.132*	-0.136*	-0.135
							(0.052)	(0.053)	(0.086)
Occupation: Laborers, except farm vs. Professional and managerial							-0.085	-0.087	-0.368
							(0.114)	(0.115)	(0.199)
Occupation: Farmers, farm managers, farm laborers and foremen vs. Professional and managerial							0.118	0.107	-0.169
							(0.111)	(0.112)	(0.179)
Occupation: Homemakers vs. Professional and managerial							0.144*	0.145*	0.229*
							(0.062)	(0.062)	(0.100)
Union Membership in Household: No vs. Yes							0.541***	0.543***	0.448***
							(0.040)	(0.041)	(0.064)
Party Identification of Father: Democrat vs. Independent/Other									-0.543***
									(0.108)
Party Identification of Father: Republican vs. Independent/Other									0.708***
									(0.122)
Party Identification of Mother: Democrat vs. Independent/Other									-0.668***
									(0.101)
Party Identification of Mother: Republican vs. Independent/Other									0.623***
									(0.116)
Democrat|Independent/None/Other	-0.190**	-0.103	-0.288**	0.101	-0.068	-0.226*	-0.129	-0.175	0.058
	(0.071)	(0.070)	(0.097)	(0.080)	(0.107)	(0.133)	(0.133)	(0.138)	(0.210)
Independent/None/Other|Republican	1.395***	1.483***	1.298***	1.704***	1.535***	1.427***	1.572***	1.546***	2.072***
	(0.072)	(0.071)	(0.097)	(0.081)	(0.108)	(0.103)	(0.133)	(0.139)	(0.212)
Var(~1|State)	0.183	0.154	0.156	0.144	0.146	0.086	0.157	0.158	0.040
Var(~1|Year of Interview x State)								0.063	0.060
Log-likelihood	-16313.820	-16306.048	-16302.199	-16128.681	-16125.848	-15718.895	-13387.337	-13370.750	-4948.293
N	15484	15484	15484	15414	15414	15357	13326	13326	5648

Significance: *** = p < 0.001; ** = p < 0.01; * = p < 0.05