

Part III

Exploring the Interaction

In the last section, we tested competing hypotheses from legal development theory (Levine & Tapp, 1977; Tapp & Kohlberg, 1977) and social learning theory (Akers, 1985; Akers et al., 1979; Bandura, 1969a, 1969b, 1977) to determine which is the better predictor of legal socialization effects. We also tested the hypothesis that an interaction between legal reasoning and rule-enforcing conditions would predict legal socialization effects. We found that legal development level was a better predictor than rule-enforcing conditions and that the interaction explained a significant amount of the variance in attitudes toward rules and rule-violation but not the rule-violating behaviors themselves. The next three chapters focus on the interaction in order to explore the nature of this relationship between legal reasoning and the environment of rule enforcement and its import for understanding legal socialization.

In Chapter 7 we investigate the linkages among our three person variables: legal reasoning, situational attitudes (the normative status of the rule-violating behaviors and the enforcement status of the rules), and the frequency of engaging in rule-violating behaviors. We test the hypothesis, advanced in Chapter 1, that attitudinal variables mediate between reasoning and behaviors. This mediating model suggests that situational factors provide the basis for a linkage between legal reasoning and rule following or rule violation. On the other hand, our previous analyses found that neither legal development level nor the rule-enforcing conditions have successfully predicted the frequency of engaging in rule-violating behaviors. Because both legal development theory and the cognitive versions of social learning theory argue that there is a relationship between some form of reasoning and socialized behaviors, we think it is important to investigate whether the mediating model holds for our variables. Using path analysis, we distinguish between rule-violating and rule-following behaviors and then test the validity of direct versus mediating models and cognitive versus behavioral models (representing cognitive developmental theory and social learning theory, respectively) for each.

Chapter 8 takes a different analytical tack in exploring the interaction.

Here we look at individual differences among our subjects in their propensity toward rule following or rule violation. We investigate whether individuals' offense status is related to their legal development level, to their attitudes toward rules and rule-violating behaviors, to the rule-enforcing conditions in which they lived during the socialization period, and to the kind of behavior being controlled. Both rule-following and rule-violating modes of behavior are explored. Successful legal socialization may be largely a function of legal development or of rule-enforcing conditions or of situational norms—or, more likely, of some combination of these factors. Deviation may be the mirror image of these relationships or it may reflect a different pattern of interaction altogether.

Chapter 9 describes the experiences of residents in the external authority condition with authoritarian rule enforcement and the experiences of residents in the peer authority condition with their internal hearing board. These experiences, treated as a series of case studies, reveal how the rule-enforcing conditions in each experimental condition affected social interactions in the residence halls. The qualitative data from interviews, participant observation and tape recordings illustrate how residents reacted to various kinds of rule-enforcement problems. Each community developed its own enforcement norms and its own pattern of rule violation. We pay particular attention to the legal socialization effects of the internal hearing board and to the kind of learning that took place when the residents were confronted with responsibility for their own community.