

Political Socialization

Political socialization is the process by which political culture is transmitted in a given society. It occurs at both the individual and community level, and it extends beyond the acquisition of political culture to encompass the learning of more sophisticated political ideas and orientations. Political socialization is a life long process and a variety of individuals and institutions contribute to its shaping effect. For example, individuals are politically socialized by such groups as their family, peers, and social class. Furthermore, they are socialized by existing laws, media, religion, education, their own gender, and more. Basically, the process is never ending and the factors which shape it are all encompassing.

Those groups and institutions which contribute to the process of political socialization are known as the agents of socialization. These sources affect the development of political values and attitudes differently, but they all contribute to the individual's understanding of and orientations toward politics. The primary agents of socialization are those that directly develop specific political orientations such as the family. Whereas, the secondary agents of socialization tend to be less personal and involved in the process of socialization in a more indirect manner such as the media.

Basic political attitudes and values tend to be formed early in childhood and tend to be relatively consistent throughout life. Thus, the family is a very important agent of political socialization. However, the degree to which these basic political orientations are retained by the individual varies as a result of the discontinuities one experiences in their political socialization. Hence, this is where the other agents of political socialization become fundamental factors in one's political development.