

Development of the citizens of a country: factors that effect on it

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



HOW HAS PUBLIC OPINION, SOCIALIZATION AND THE MEDIA SHAPED THE DEVELOPMENT OF CITIZENS OF A COUNTRY?

The development of citizens is essential to the political system of a country because citizens play a large role in leading change and affecting policy. Political and social development is dependent on the actions of the citizens. The way that citizens act in relation to politics is dependent on several factors. The most important of those factors are public opinion, socialization and recently the media. These factors shape citizen development by forming and spreading a public opinions, beliefs and values among the citizens in order to influence the way they vote and participate in politics.

Public opinion is a collective idea of the citizens' views and thoughts about the government and politics. According to W. W. Norton's American Politics Today, public opinion is important for three main reasons, 1) citizens' political actions are driven by their opinions, (2) public opinion helps explain the behavior of candidates, political parties, and other political actors; politicians look to public opinion to determine what citizens want them to do, (3) public opinion can also shed light on the reasons for specific policy outcomes . The public opinion is supposed to allow citizens to feel represented and heard by the government. This is very important for the development of citizens in a country because when citizens feel as if their own opinion matters, they are more likely to participate in politics which will lead to political and social development within the political system in the country.

Some scholars argue whether or not public opinion actually represents the opinions of the people. While some say that polls and survey may be an effective way of measuring the interests of the public, others believe that most citizens don't take polls seriously. While some of these official polls and surveys offer some sort of incentive, often times it is not very large and many offer no incentive at all. For that reason, some citizens don't feel that participating in these surveys will benefit them at all so they choose not to participate. Other citizens may take the survey and rush to finish which may cause their answers to be inaccurate and fail to reflect the actual opinions of the people. Though some citizens realize the effect that their participation can have on the decisions that are made by political leaders, the results of these polls usually either represent a small sample or a large inaccurate sample. This may contribute to the public opinion differing from the actual opinions of the citizens which is why meaningful citizen participation is very important.

Public opinion is often gathered in polls and surveys before it is relayed to the public. These polls attempt to gather ideas and beliefs of the people and communicate it to the government so that their needs can be met. These polls and surveys encourage political participation because it leads the citizens to feel as if they are in control of the decisions that will impact them and their country. The results of these polls and surveys are often used when it comes to creating policy and addressing the needs of the public. For example, if a survey showed that 75% of the citizens of a country believed that a law that was in place was outdated and harmful to the public, there is

a chance that many leaders and lawmakers would take that into consideration and consider changing the law. Public opinion can influence change and encourage leadership within the citizens and that will lead to development with the country.

Though public opinion is meant to be a representation of what the citizens feel or believe, Public opinion can also play the role of telling the citizens what to believe. Public opinion often contributes largely to political socialization which is defined by Oxford Reference as the process by which people come to acquire political attitudes and values. Political socialization causes citizens of a country to behave a certain way in regards to politics and the political system in their country. Though public opinion supposedly represents the opinions of the people, public opinion is usually based off a certain group or sample and then given to the public in order to influence their own thoughts and opinions. One of the biggest problems with trying to measure public opinion is that surveys are composed of random samples, small subsets of the population being studied. Building a truly random sample is costly, and different survey techniques will trade off on whether they want to emphasize cost or randomness. (W. W. Norton) In many ways, public opinion is distributed to the public as a form of political socialization. Citizens believe that what they are being told is the opinion of the public so many of them align their beliefs and political practices with what the “public” is doing accordingly. This is done in many ways but recently, the most popular way of distributing public opinion is through the media.

The media is a way for the government to reach out to the population in a large and impactful way. Britannica states that mass media plays an important role by “ letting individuals know what other people think and by giving political leaders large audiences. In this way the media makes it possible for public opinion to encompass large numbers of individuals and wide geographic areas.” Media plays a large part in forming opinions and socialization because media is always surrounding citizens in some form. Media comes in many forms including newspapers, television, and the internet, these forms of media are a part of everyday life for most citizens which is why it is a very useful tool in influencing the political development of citizens in a country.

Though media is very useful, it can be misleading. The political parties and other government groups often will try to use media to push their own personal agenda rather than strictly reporting the facts of the matter. The influence of the media’s political coverage on the average citizen’s thoughts or actions is called media effect. Since media is so prevalent, many citizens rely solely on the media to form their political opinions. Because of this, media is often used to influence and shape opinions more than it is used to relay facts and information to the public. This shaping is done in four main ways . The first way is filtering which refers to journalists’ and editors’ decisions about what information to report. They can choose to leave out information that may cause the public to act in a way that is undesirable by the government. The next way that this shaping takes place is slant which is the process of giving favorable coverage to one candidate or policy without

providing a balanced perspective. This is seen very often in television today with the use of ads and commercials that promote certain candidates. This is usually done so that when deciding to vote, citizens will associate certain thoughts and images with certain candidates. The third way that the media shapes public opinion is called priming which is the altering of the public's image of a candidate caused by negative or positive coverage of the candidate. This is done so that the citizens do not choose "the wrong candidate" or in other words, the candidate that is not favored by particular groups within the government and political parties. This strategy is often used against more radical leaders in order to ensure that citizens will not feel influenced to rise up against the government. Finally, a method called framing is used to influence public opinion as a result of the way a story is presented, including or excluding details, explanations, or context. This allows certain media outlets to "frame" a situation in a way that aligns with the desired political culture in a country. All of these methods can be used to socialize citizens and shape the public opinion causing citizen development to be a product of the information that the media displays.

Public opinion is a direct product of socialization. There are many tools of socialization including the media. With the growth of the mass media, the impact of political socialization has grown. There are benefits and harmful effects of political socialization. One of the benefits is that it encourages uniformity within the citizens. This uniformity can help with the development of the country by creating common goals and beliefs. Unfortunately, socialization can also be harmful to the development of a country due to the

fact that it promotes conforming to a social “ norm”. When the citizens’ behavior differs from the norm, their needs are often left unmet and it creates inequality within the political system. Inequality holds up development and causes conflicts and corruption within the government. In a democratic system, it is imperative that citizens be able to form their own opinions outside of the public opinion. While socialization and the concept of a public opinion can be helpful, it is important to have a sense of individuality throughout the citizens so that development can take place in a free and fair manner, free from government control.

Overall, public opinion, socialization and the media play a large part in shaping the development of the citizens of a country. While citizens are allowed to think for themselves and have their own thoughts and beliefs, the government has a hand in influencing the way that people think and participate when it comes to politics. In today’s society, most citizens rely completely on the media to inform them about politics and the government. While this may be one of the most convenient ways to be informed, scholars who study public opinion may recommend that citizens include another source of political information to their everyday lives. Public opinion accounts for many of the decisions made within political systems but it is still important for citizens to be aware of how they contribute to what is accepted as public opinion.