

Political socialization

Sociology



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Political Socialization Political socialization is the process by which the political values of a society are passed on to the next generation of citizens (“ Political Socialization”). It is also the process by which the individual citizen, throughout their entire life, gains their political values and their ideas about politics (CliffsNotes). The agents of political socialization are those groups through whom these ideas are passed onto the individual citizens. These include the family unit, the education system, religious organizations, and the greater culture in which the individual lives. An individual's family and friends are considered to be their primary socialization group. These are the people to whom they are closest, and those people who have the most influence over the actions of that individual. The family especially is the strongest agent of political socialization. Children will generally carry on the political views of their parents and their household (“ Political Socialization”). Parents do not generally deliberately discuss politics with their children until they are older, but opinions shared in the household are learned by those children. For example, the news shows watched by the parent or the conversations had between older household members will tell the child what their parent or parents believe (CliffsNotes)). Schools and other organized educational settings are considered secondary agents of political socialization. They may not pass on a specific opinion, but instead try to give students the knowledge to continue the political system as a whole. They receive instruction through government or history classes on how the system functions (“ Political Socialization”). Schools also use setups like student government and mock elections to introduce their students to the political system as it exists in their country (CliffsNotes). Religious organizations also act as secondary agents of political socialization, except unlike schools they

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may attempt to pass on a specific set of political values instead of worrying about whether the individuals understand how the system works. For example, Roman Catholic priests are well-known for espousing socially conservative views during homilies. The traditions of each religious group can affect their political leanings, as can their historical roots (“Political Socialization”). The social and cultural environment can also act as an agent of political socialization. For example, poorer families generally are less well-educated and have less information about the political system. Regional differences, such as northern tolerance and liberality versus southern conservatism, also play a part in political socialization (“Political Socialization”). While the desire of parents and religious organizations to pass on their moral and political views is understandable and even somewhat commendable, I believe it is more important that parents try to pass on critical thinking skills to their children. I feel I will have succeeded as a parent if someday my children argue with me about my political views, and can cite real reasons why they disagree. It is more important to me that the next generation of voters be informed and educated about the political system than that they believe the same things I believe.

Works Cited
CliffsNotes. “American Government: Political Socialization.” CliffsNotes. com. Web. 3 Sept 2011. “Political Socialization.” Web. 3 Sept 2011.