

POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION IN NORTH AMERICA,
MAINLY THE UNITED STATES, BUT WITH SOME REFERENCE
TO CANADA, RESEARCH STUDIES PERMITTING,

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SCOPE AND CONTENTS: The thesis attempts to construct a
theory on how attitudes are developed through
the political socialization process. The forces
of the paper will be on the principal agents of
socialization (family, school, peer groups, and
social milieu) and their impact on political
attitude acquisition. The central hypothesis
of this paper is that the family does not play
the most influential role in the political
socialization paper. The thesis will attempt to
present an over-all picture of the process of
political socialization and analyze the role
each agent plays in the creation of political
man.

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INTRODUCTION

My main intention in undertaking this thesis was to familiarize myself with the literature of political socialization and to attempt to present a picture of the overall process.

My primary motive for attempting a cross-cultural comparison of the socialization process in Canada and the United States was to determine if such strikingly similar cultures employ different processes in instilling in citizens positive orientations to the political system. After months of reviewing the literature that exists I am somewhat disappointed in the lack of research in this field. I can only suggest probable effects cultural differences have on the political socialization process as it relates to the United States and Canada.

There are still wide differences among scholars about the precise meaning of political socialization. Chapter one deals with the multiplicity of definitions and explanations of the process and attempts to bring them together to form a broad common meaning with which we can work.

The remainder of the paper will be devoted to focusing on the principal agents of socialization: the

family, school, peer groups, and social milieu, and mediating factors: sex, socio-economic status, and intelligence, to determine their impact on political-attitude acquisition. These agents seem to be active in all cultural settings in spite of wide variations in their precise impact from one cultural setting to the next.

The major hypothesis of this paper is that the family does not play the most influential role in the political socialization process. Other agents of socialization have been under-emphasized and their impact must be reviewed and analyzed before we understand how the political socialization process functions.

My original intention was to prove that another agent of socialization, such as the school or peer group, should be awarded the title of being the most influential in determining what political attitudes are adopted. After extensive reading, I feel this is not so either, and this approach if pursued would distort understanding of the political socialization process as a whole. Instead, I shall satisfy myself with the negative hypothesis and suggest intriguing differences in the role each agent plays and

3.

attempt to present an over-all picture of the process of political socialization and how each agent contributes to the amazing creation of political man.

I

THE CONCEPT OF POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION

In spite of a common border and intriguing differences in the similar cultures of Canada and the United States, investigators have been slow in exploring the full implication of these differences as they affect the two political systems. A rapidly growing body of literature notwithstanding, we are still uncertain about the full impact of culture on the political socialization process. This uncertainty seems especially present in efforts to account for different orientations to politics exhibited by Canadians and Americans. The study of political socialization, or the process by which an individual acquires political attitudes, has been one of the principal concerns of political scientists since Herbert Hyman's pioneering work in 1959,¹ and it has proven an effective approach to understanding the reasons for an individual's political attitudes and behaviors.

There are still wide differences among scholars about the precise meaning of political socialization. What is this process all about and why is it worth studying?

Many scholars in various disciplines, political science as well as psychology, sociology, and education have been tackling the implications of the socialization process without really agreeing on a common meaning for the process which they are attempting to study. There are, indeed, many dimensions of political socialization and it is the purpose of this chapter to discuss the most prominent ones and to attempt to bring them together to form a broad common meaning with which we can work.

One aspect from which political socialization has often been studied is that of a learning process. Roberta Sigel, a prominent researcher in the field, has defined political socialization as a "learning process by which people learn to adopt the norms, values, attitudes and behaviors accepted and practiced by the ongoing system."² Looking at political socialization from this perspective we would expect that learning takes place in a developmental sequence. From the birth of a child to the day he votes in an election, a child would be learning politically relevant attitudes transmitted by the society in which he lives. How does a child learn political attitudes and who is his teacher? As a child's world is usually limited to

interactions with his family, school, and friends many studies have focused on these agents of socialization but no agreement has been reached on the exact sequence or the exact ages at which political learning takes place and which, if any, of these agents (the family, school, and peer groups) plays the most influential role in the development of political attitudes. Most of the literature dealing with the political socialization process has tended to suggest that the family plays the most influential role in the development of political attitudes.³ The major hypothesis of this paper as previously stated is that the family does not play the most vital role in the socialization process. Both the family and other agents of socialization such as the school, peer groups, and social milieu will be examined in the remainder of the paper in hopes of assessing their relative importance.

Learning does not take place in a vacuum, and the learning of politically relevant attitudes is no exception. It, too, can be greatly affected by the environmental setting in which it takes place. Consequently, many researchers have focused on characterizing the varying environmental settings in which it takes place and analyzing the political attitudes held by its inhabitants. Research has

now clearly demonstrated that though the socialization process is universal, there are significant variations in the process across cultural as well as sub-cultural lines. One of the intentions of this paper is to study the differences in political attitudes across cultural and sub-cultural lines as they affect the inhabitants of Canada and the United States. These two countries have similar cultural settings yet differences appear to exist in the political attitudes held by each country's citizens. It is also my intention to examine briefly the attitudes held by the people of sub-cultures within each society. Black America and French Canada constitute two of the larger, most visible and perhaps most complex of the sub-cultures existing today in North America. Environmental differences have been suggested by many researchers to be paramount in explaining the differing political attitudes held by these minority groups. Thus, when studying political socialization processes we must consider not only the primary agents of a society; the schools, family, and peer groups, but also the environmental setting in which the society operates.

Dawson and Prewitt see the political socialization process as parallel to the natural maturation process and essential in instilling in children a basic feeling of self.⁴

The original concept of 'self' was developed by George Mead who defined it as "The development (of a person) initially not there at birth but arises in the process of social experience and activity."⁵ The development of a political self therefore is sequential as a child "acquires a complex of beliefs, feelings, and information which help him comprehend, evaluate, and relate to the political world around him."⁶ It is political socialization which molds and shapes the citizen's relationship to the political community. As a child matures and interacts with his family, his teachers, and his peers he acquires political input in the form of information, attitudes, and norms. The first result is an acquisition of emotional nationhood feelings but later there develops a more complete, cognitive understanding of the political system."⁷ It is essential, therefore, to view political socialization as an ongoing developmental process parallel to the natural maturation process of an individual. As a child becomes more sophisticated, perhaps as a result of direct political learning in school, so do his political attitudes and understanding change and develop.

Gabriel Almond, a prominent researcher in the field of political socialization, expands on the idea of the

development of a 'political self' and speaks of 'latent' and 'manifest' political socialization. The former, he states is "nominally nonpolitical learning such as personality development and the acquisition of general cultural values in the family which in some way affects political behavior."⁸ Almond suggests that the existence of an authoritarian father could vastly alter the political values a child holds. Nonpolitical learning, Almond suggests, is often very influential in the acquisition of political attitudes and can be more significant than direct political teaching or 'manifest political socialization.'⁹ One of the most influential factors Almond found in accounting for French children's less than favourable political attitudes was the cynical beliefs often expressed by adults.¹⁰ Almond's research suggests an obvious need to re-evaluate the significance and role of each agent of political socialization (the family, school, peers, and environment) so we can understand how political attitudes are developed. Most research in political socialization to date has focused primarily on the formal learning of the political system in accounting for the acquisition of political attitudes and has tended to ignore the informal or 'latent' forms of

political socialization. We must come to an agreement on how political views are formed before we can meaningfully study them.

Every individual then has a political self-concept. As a child acquires beliefs, feelings, and information his political belief system changes to accommodate his understanding of the political world in which he exists. Before we proceed it is vital to define some of the basic concepts we will be dealing with. A belief system "represents the total universe of a person's beliefs about the physical world, the social world, and the self. . .and can be analyzed in terms of sub-systems such as beliefs, attitudes, ideologies, values, and opinions."¹¹

Personality traits are adopted early in childhood. They have been defined as "generally distinguishing and enduring characteristics, elements, or qualities of the human personality."¹² Although there is much controversy to exactly how personality traits are formed there is a general consensus that projections are made from these traits to interpreting and understanding political phenomena. Most of the research in this field focuses on political orientation directed toward authority relationships and participation

and the results have been positive indicating that the transfer is made. "Political observers throughout the ages have variously attributed man's political activity to his need for power, competition, achievement, affiliation, aggression, money, prestige, status, recognition, approval, manipulation - in short, to virtually every need that impels human behavior."¹³ Personality can be viewed as a product of socialization and develops as a person interacts with parents and significant others in his environment and develops response patterns. The literature suggests that the family appears to be the major influence in the adoption of basic personality traits of an individual. These traits have been found to be very stable and enduring over time.¹⁴ It has been suggested that they are the formative features of the self concept and are most important shaping attitudes and other sub-systems of one's belief system.

A value is a type of belief, centrally located within one's total belief system and has been defined as "abstract ideals, positive or negative, not tied to any specific attitude object or situation, representing a person's beliefs about ideal modes of construct and ideal terminal goals."¹⁵ A person's values, like all beliefs, may be consciously

conceived or unconsciously held, and can be inferred from what a person says or does. Some commonly found values in North America and other democratic nations are freedom, equality, individualism, security, etc., and these culture-bound values serve as a reference point from which we interpret political phenomena.

Ideology has been commonly defined as an organization of beliefs and attitudes - be they religious, philosophical or political in nature that are "more or less institutionalized or shared with others derived from external authority."¹⁶

It has been suggested by many researchers that an ideology is the product of man's need for imposing intellectual order on the world.¹⁷ "Ideology consists of selected or distorted ideas about a social system or a class of social systems when these ideas purport to be factual, and also carry more or less explicit evaluation of the 'facts'."¹⁸ Ideology, then, is a pattern of beliefs and concepts, be they factual or not, that purport to explain social phenomena aiding the individual in directing and simplifying the many political choices he must make.

Beliefs are commonly defined as cognitions with an extra feeling of credibility, more specifically a belief is

"any simple proposition, conscious or unconscious, inferred from what a person says or does, capable of being preceded by the phrase 'I believe that. . .'"¹⁹ Whether or not the content of a belief is true is not important, what is important is that beliefs are predispositions to action; an individual who strongly believes in something will behave accordingly. A person's political self is embedded in his beliefs. If, for example, an individual strongly believes it is his duty as a citizen to participate politically and by doing so he can have an effect on the political system, he will probably behave in accordance with his beliefs. Attitudes are a set of interrelated predispositions to actions or beliefs and will be discussed shortly. Milton Rokeach describes every belief as an organization containing three components: 1) cognitive; because a belief represents a person's knowledge about what is true, good, or desirable, 2) affective; because a belief is capable of arousing affect, and 3) behavioral; because the belief being a response predisposition may lead to action if activated.²⁰ The literature has suggested that an individual's beliefs are formed early in childhood and are greatly influenced by parental beliefs. Furthermore, they appear to be very stable and enduring over time and serve as a reference point from

which individuals interpret later new experiences.

Attitudes are a set of beliefs and are typically defined as predispositions of individuals to evaluate some general aspect of the (political) world. They are "a relatively enduring organization of beliefs around an object or situation predisposing one to respond in some preferential manner."²¹ Almost all writers are agreed that attitudes are acquired through the learning process, although the exact sequence of attitude-acquisition has not been determined. An attitude is "the individuals organization of psychological processes, as inferred from his behavior, with respect to some aspect of the world which he distinguishes from other aspects."²² Thus, attitudes represent one's realm of previous experiences with which one approaches subsequent situations and together with the contemporary influences determines his behavior in it.

Attitudes are more specific than beliefs yet they too appear to be fairly stable and durable. No one agent is solely responsible for influencing attitudes but all agents play a role throughout an individual's life. They are evaluated for compatibility with one's personality traits and basic beliefs and are enduring in the sense that these are fairly stable points of reference and subsequent experiences

tend to reinforce them.

Opinions have to do with specific issues and are defined as "responses an individual gives in a particular situation in which some question is raised."²³ Opinions are generally expressed on fairly narrow and specific points, and a number of expressed opinions may allow us to infer the existence of an underlying more general attitude. Thus, although opinions are relatively superficial, changeable, and limited, they often have their roots in attitude systems which are more enduring and with closer links to the individual's personality. Our political opinions are in a constant state of flux often being formed quickly and changing to adopt new current information and cues the environment provides affecting one's interpretation of political reality.

To summarize, basic political identification, beliefs, and personality traits are formed early in childhood and appear to be greatly influenced by the family. They are general in nature, and they appear to be fairly stable and durable over time. They probably serve as one of the major and most important reference points from which an individual interprets new experiences. Attitudes are more specific predispositions from which political phenomena are interpreted and they too are fairly enduring. The environment or culture provides

cues from which an individual may form or adjust political attitudes. They must, though, be somewhat congruent with inner core beliefs or they will probably be rejected.

Opinions are conscious responses to very specific issues and are in a constant state of flux as new information and cues affect ones political understanding.

Political socialization thus far has been viewed as a learning process which takes place in all societies in a developmental sequence and is affected by both direct and indirect political learning as well as by indirect social learning all tending to create a political self. Socialization, though, is not a simple transfer of behavior from one generation to another. If it were, change would never occur. Changes in political attitudes do occur, of course, and many explanations have been offered to better understand how and why these variations occur. In the 1960's growth of militancy and protest spread throughout the North American campus. In the United States the confrontation between students and "the establishment" were brought sharply into focus by the Kent State shootings, the Vietnam protests, and numerous attempts to take over the administration quarters on several campuses.²⁴ Canada also has experienced student unrest of various kinds. Jack Quarter, a Canadian

political scientist describes in his book, Student Movement in the Sixties, the student movement at the University of Toronto and attempts to account for the changing political attitudes of youth by stating his belief that there is a strong need for participation in the decision-making processes of society.²⁵

This strong desire to participate by the youth of the sixties can best be explained by focusing on some of the major events that might have promulgated these feelings. The undeclared war in Vietnam drafted thousands of young men to fight in a situation many considered to be immoral. Perhaps because the general feelings of the citizens in the United States were negative towards the war or perhaps because there was little or no opportunity for citizens to directly participate in the major decisions concerning the war including the very choice of serving as a soldier, the youth in North America grew impatient and were intent on having their voices heard. Many soldiers died in Vietnam and the effects of the undeclared war were felt personally by youth as their friends or relatives lives were taken.

The mass media exposure of the Vietnam war may have also played a role in contributing to student demonstrations and riots. The war was a focal point of almost every major

daily newscast. People tend to pay attention to political reporting when issues affect their lives personally. The more people are exposed to politics in the media the more likely they are to participate politically if the issues are salient to them either by talking about issues more or as in the case of college students in the sixties to demonstrate their dissatisfaction with the 'system' that appeared to be negatively affecting their lives.

The preservation of 'law and order' on campuses even served as the basis of several electoral platforms. It is apparent that the simple transfer of beliefs and attitudes does not account for the confrontation that exists between students and administration on many campuses today. According to Quarter, the lack of policy-making powers is resulting in a feeling of alienation towards the establishment by students.²⁶

Role-conflict has been offered as another possible explanation for changing political attitudes.²⁷ When individuals experience diverse political demands in conflicting roles they often must compromise and re-evaluate political attitudes to satisfy both roles. An example of role-conflict is a Jehovah's Witness child taught by his parents and religious instructors that the government is bad

and to abstain from vowing oaths of allegiance to it and yet, taught by the school and his teachers that the government is benevolent and it is the duty of all citizens to pledge their allegiance to the flag every morning. The child finds himself in conflicting roles where both roles cannot be satisfied and must adjust his political attitudes one way or the other. Since both conflicting demands cannot be fulfilled, the result will be a change of political attitudes.

Indices of Political Socialization

Political socialization is best described in Fred Greenstein's definition in the International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences. He says:

Viewed this way, political socialization would encompass all political learning, formal and informal, deliberate and unplanned, at every stage of the life cycle including not only explicitly political learning but: also nominally non-political behavior such as the learning of politically relevant social attitudes and the acquisition of politically relevant personality characteristics.²⁸

This is a broad yet all encompassing definition of all facets of the political socialization process and it is from this commonly agreed on explanation we proceed.

Having determined a common definition with which we can work, let us now turn our attention to some indicators of political socialization which help evaluate and measure

the process at any given point in time. Four of the most commonly used indices of political socialization are the degree of political efficacy, political cynicism, sense of citizen duty, and desire to participate politically.

The sense of political efficacy may be described as the feeling that the individual political action has, or can have, an impact on the political process.²⁹ The formal and informal aspects of political learning normally instill in citizens a feeling of importance and a feeling that it is they, the people, who rule their country. It is very important for the stability of a government that the development of a feeling of political efficacy occur. It is fundamental in determining the future political behavior of people for without this feeling people would no longer participate in government or wish to do so and this would result, undoubtedly, in the demise of that government. Several studies have investigated the degree of political efficacy present in citizens but we shall concentrate on two of the most complete ones. Angus Campbell et al. did a study in the 1950's and found that not all citizens of the United States share the same feeling or degree of efficacy towards their government.³⁰ They also found that those of upper status, better educated,

and male tended to more often display a feeling that they could, through their actions, have a substantial impact on the government. Almond and Verba in their five-nation study found similar results; those exhibiting a higher degree of efficacious feelings towards the political system tended to be more active citizens, more educated citizens, and more likely to be the recipient of political communication and engaging more often in political discussions.³¹ Almond and Verba concluded that a relationship exists between social status, participation, and satisfaction with the political system thus being that those who were politically aware and active exhibited much greater feelings of efficacy towards their government.³² Almond and Verba state; "Compared with the citizen whose subjective competence is low, the self-confident citizen is likely to be the active citizen, to follow politics, to discuss politics, to be a more active partisan. He is also more likely to be satisfied with his role as a participant and likely to be more favourably disposed toward the performance of his political system and to have a generally more positive orientation to it."³³

Political attitudes are a very complex variable to measure, but if we are to understand the political socialization process it is imperative that we attempt to

understand the implications of studies that measure political attitudes. Another indicator of the results or influence of the political socialization process is the degree of political cynicism citizens hold toward the political system. Political cynicism, or the extent to which people hold politics and politicians in disrepute has been studied by Agger, Goldstein, and Pearl.³⁴ The research was conducted in a small western town in the United States and respondents were questioned on the degree of trust or faith they held for fellow citizens. The outcome of the study showed that most respondents felt that people are generally cooperative, trustworthy, and helpful. These same respondents were asked if they believed that they could work with fellow citizens in attempting to influence the government and they showed that "a belief in the benignity of one's fellow citizen is directly related to one's propensity to join with others in political activity, thus showing general social trust is translated into politically relevant trust."³⁵ Understanding why people hold cynical attitudes towards government can help us understand the feelings of discontent displayed by many citizens in North America today. Agger et. al.'s findings suggest that a feeling of cynicism towards government can possibly be the result of an early general development of mistrust for one's fellow man and can be transferred in later

years to one's government.

Political cynicism, it has been suggested, can also be a community-wide feeling and may even exist as a community norm.³⁶ Consideration, therefore, must be given to the political milieu of the community that fosters the acceptance of this general feeling of cynicism towards the government of that town, state, or country. This finding is most helpful in understanding the increase of campus unrest for it is probably the general feeling of dislike for a government that leads to a community-wide protest or demonstration at the university level or any other level. Not all people hold the same degree of political cynicism, but as the number of people who hold cynical feelings rise, political cynicism becomes an accepted community norm and new and old members begin to accept the legitimacy of it. As these feelings nurture and mount, the release of these feelings in the form of protest or demonstration of somekind are only natural and community wide accepted.

Political socialization as a process explains how attitudes develop. The indices of political socialization show the degree of political efficacy, political cynicism, the sense of citizen duty, and the desire to participate politically.

The feeling that oneself and others ought to

participate in the political system regardless of whether such political activity is seen as personally rewarding has been labeled 'the sense of citizen duty.'³⁷ Accepted as a national norm of both Canada and the United States and every democratic nation, it is probable that this sense of citizen duty has been instilled in most citizens through the political socialization process. A study conducted by Campbell et. al. and published in their book, The Voter Decides, confirms this assumption.³⁸ Questions were asked such as, "It isn't so important to vote when you know your party doesn't have a chance of winning?" or "If a person doesn't care how an election comes out, he wouldn't bother to vote," resulted in half the respondents disagreeing indicating that many people feel it is the duty of every citizen to vote and partake in the prescribed channels of citizen action in our democratic nations.³⁹ This mode of thinking has been instilled in many people as an accepted norm as a result of the socialization process. Parents, teachers, peers, as well as the community milieu teach children at an early age the accepted democratic norms. The sense of citizen duty is one of these norms and Campbell's study shows that it appears to be accepted by most citizens.

The desire to participate politically is another democratic norm widely accepted by both nations. Almond and Verba found most Americans accept norms of participation and when asked, "What role should the ordinary man play in his local community?", found most respondents frequently mentioned taking part in local government bodies.⁴⁰ Similar studies conducted in Canada illustrate that the participatory norm of democratic nations is well accepted.⁴¹ We would expect then, that the actual amount of political participation in the decision-making process of both countries to be relatively high. It must be pointed out, though, that one can believe he ought to participate politically but yet feel unable to do so perhaps doubting his ability to participate and the effects, if any, his participation would have on the decisional outcomes. Adequate research on the actual level of participation is lacking so we must proceed on the premise that it is in agreement somewhat with the desire to participate.

A democratic nation is only healthy insofar as its people are able to influence the political system and are sufficiently involved to wish to do so. The political socialization process can only instill in people the attitudes

and beliefs the current society holds. A brief look at the indices of political socialization reveal the prevalent democratic norms are accepted in both Canada and the United States. I have not discussed, though, how a child learns these political attitudes and accepted norms. The remainder of this paper will be devoted to looking at the agents of political socialization (the family, school, peer groups, and community milieu), and analyzing the role each plays in the development of political attitudes, beliefs, and opinions.

II

AGENTS OF POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION

Political socialization is a process whereby individuals acquire political attitudes and accepted norms. Having determined a common agreement on the definition of this process, many researchers set out to discover 'what' attitudes are held by most members of a society. Although this is extremely important in determining the political atmosphere of our time, I feel it is missing, or perhaps avoiding, a more fundamental question that leads to the real understanding of the political socialization process. That question is 'how' are attitudes formed in a given society; it is only when we can understand the answer to this question that we can proceed to do meaningful research.

In reviewing research on political socialization much has been done in attempting to determine how political attitudes are acquired. Focusing on the principal agents of socialization and their impact on political attitude acquisition is the most common approach, and it is the approach this paper will primarily focus on to resolve this

dispute on how attitudes are acquired.

What is an 'agent'? Walter Gerson defines an agent of socialization as a "mechanism, social structure, or person through which individuals learn to be motivationally and technically adequate in the performance of certain roles."¹ An agent therefore is something that equips members of a society to cope with and function within some segment of our society. An agent of political socialization equips members of our society with certain attitudes and norms about our political system and trains citizens to perform certain functions such as voting and to participate within that political system. Hess describes the socialization process as one in which "both individual and institutionally designated agents act on behalf of the society in initiating children and pre-adults into social units and institutions."²

Investigators have identified the family, school, peer group, and social environment as among the most important agents of socialization, but there is great disagreement on the importance or relative impact of each agent in determining how political attitudes are formed. These agents, nevertheless, seem to be active in all cultural settings, in spite

of wide variations in their precise roles and impact from one cultural setting to the next.

The literature on political socialization has tended to favour the family as the agent having the most crucial role stating that it is the family which is most influential in the political-attitude formation of youth and claim the other agents play a lesser role. One of the most influential studies in getting us to the supreme importance of the family was the pioneering work of Herbert Hyman. Hyman identifies the family as "foremost among agencies of socialization into politics;"³ Dawson and Prewitt also suggest the supreme role of the family in their findings.⁴ This will be discussed later in the paper.

Recent studies of political socialization have established substantial doubts about the importance placed on the family and they suggest that other agents do play a greater role in the political socialization process. The famous study by Hess and Torney concludes "that the public school is the most important and effective instrument of political socialization in the United States."⁵ "Environmental differences and peer group influences have also been suggested as agents which contribute substantially to

politicizing youth."⁶ Although this may appear as a trivial and insignificant point, it is essential to determine what role each of the agents play if we are to understand 'how' attitudes are formed in youth. Many researchers, in fact, have focused their studies solely on determining the role each agent plays in the socialization process. This study will attempt to review the literature on agent-importance and to focus on each agent of socialization and its relative impact on the political socialization process.

Methodology

The methodological approach used in the majority of studies on socialization has been the employment of questionnaires and structured interviews dealing with simple forms of knowledge about the national political and social system order. Most studies have focused on the over-all question of agent-importance, but some have also produced findings of the effects of age/grade, sex, socio-economic status, and IQ differences on the attitudes held by children. These differences will be discussed briefly in addition to the prime focus on agent impact.

III

THE FAMILY AND POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION

The allegedly crucial role of the family in the socialization process has now been firmly established by extensive research. Herbert Hyman's study previously mentioned, identified the family as the most influential agent in determining political attitudes. Dawson and Prewitt also suggest that it is "the most important agent determining the extent and direction of political learning."¹ Although the family has held the supreme position among the agents of socialization in the past, recent studies have cast a doubt on its importance in political learning. This chapter will be devoted to analyzing the arguments in defense of the family as prime agent, and it will conclude with a discussion on what role the family actually plays in the socialization process.

The family appears, indeed, to be most influential in shaping and molding the 'political self', but I believe its role has been somewhat over-stated in the development and transmission of direct political attitudes to youth. Dawson and Prewitt claim that the family is the most

significant primary institution.² This belief is widespread and almost universally accepted, but they also state that the family plays a key position in the formation of children's political values. To summarize briefly, Dawson and Prewitt suggest four basic functions that the family fulfills and theorize that through these functions the family influences its members:

1. Through direct teaching of political values to offspring. (direct political socialization)
2. The family is important in developing a child's personality and his non-political social attitudes and values that influence the child's perceptions of political phenomena. (indirect political socialization)
3. The family is the major source through which the young individual develops his own basic self-identification. The family molds the way in which the maturing individual relates to the political world. (political self)
4. The family affects political outlooks by placing its members within a network of social and economic relationships. . . serving as reference points for political attachments and interpretations.³ (SES affect on political perception)

Dawson and Prewitt are suggesting that these four functions are not only universally applicable to all families, but that they have a direct and crucial impact on the political attitudes held by offspring not only as children but in their adult years as well. Although the latter two statements appear to be supported by the existing literature, the first two propositions I feel, should be examined closely before we analyze the role of the family in the political socialization process.

Dawson and Prewitt base their arguments on a number of studies that suggest "correspondence in political orientations between parent and offspring."⁴ Their defense of the role of the family as a direct transmitter of political attitudes is inclusive of all arguments defining the importance of this agent, therefore I will focus on its main points. Their most telling argument they feel is that children's and parents' political identification of party choice have been shown to be often the same, signifying great parental influence. Several studies have confirmed that a majority of children hold the same party identification as their parents and it is probably transmitted, from parent to child.⁵ They do not indicate, however, how other deeper and perhaps more meaningful transmission of political attitudes such as feelings of efficacy or cynicism towards a government, or desire to participate occurs. They suggest that lack of identical party identification results in less participation, but this has been shown to be more of an indicator of socio-economic-status.⁶ Party identification is an over-emphasized factor as an indicator of political feelings and attitudes. There is only a choice of two major parties in the United States

and their ideological differences have been questioned and even mocked by many prominent political scientists such as V. O. Key.⁷ Canada has four major political parties, but they do not claim to be based on ideology, but rather flexibility in dealing with the nation's problems and issues as they arise.⁸ So the choice of party identification is often a shallow and perhaps even ideology free decision, not reflecting a true agreement of political attitudes between parent and child. Dawson and Prewitt fail to state and test the other influential factors that might affect formation of party identification. Peer group affiliation, religious preference, and socio-economic status can all have substantial impact on choice of party identification. So apart from over-stating the importance of party identification, they fail to adequately explain how party identification is formed and what influences this choice.

Dawson and Prewitt proceed to defend the all-important role of the family as socializing agent and point again to Hyman's study which suggests that individuals do have political attitudes and values like those of their parents as well as similar party preferences. Not only is his study

limited in scope, but many allegations are made on a hearsay basis and are not empirically supported.

Jennings and Neimi conducted a much larger, more comprehensive and sophisticated study in 1969.⁹ They too studied the transmission of political attitudes and beliefs from parent to child. Their findings are in direct opposition to Hyman's. Matching high-school students answers to their parents they found that important discrepancies exist in their attitudes. This will be discussed in greater detail later in the paper. Another indicator of family influence Dawson and Prewitt utilized in their defense is the vital role the family plays in instilling feelings of national identification and loyalty.¹⁰ Several studies have supported this idea; Greenstein, Torney and Hess, Almond and Verba, all found that nationhood feelings and identification with political authorities and symbols were present in almost all pre-school children regardless of socio-economic status. They stated identification with the flag and citizenship occurred with most children even before they began school.¹¹ However, the family is not the only agent responsible for influencing the acquisition of strong feelings of nationhood. Hess and Torney argue very strongly

that the most important socializing agent is the school system that guides the process and shapes feelings of ingroup loyalty and transforms it into national loyalty.¹² As the child is made cognitively aware through school of what his nation is, his parents cease to be the important sources of information on international affairs. As Lambert and Kleinberg have demonstrated, other agents play a more dominant role.¹³

We can conclude by summarizing that the family plays an important role in instilling basic positive orientations to the political system but the school and other agents shape and transform these values into salient, cognitive attitudes.

Another factor Dawson and Prewitt bring forward in defense of the prominent role of the family is data showing that parent-child relationships influence the development of political interest and participation from the work of Dwaine Maverick. He describes in his book, Political Decision Makers, findings based on a study of a group of political candidates and the parental influence, if any, in their involvement in politics.¹⁴ This was determined by answers the respondents gave based on recall about the involvement

their parents had in politics. Parental political interest was found to be sustained in examining these candidates. Apart from the former criticism of the reliability of a study based on a recall questionnaire, Maverick also failed to control for socio-economic status and serious doubts arise when we realize that Maverick is focusing on a socio-economic elite, many of whose parents were politicians.

Dawson and Prewitt pursue their case for the supreme role of the family in the political socialization process by arguing that not only is the family the most important agent in determining political attitude-acquisition in youth, but that the family influence in political orientations continue throughout life.¹⁵ But Jennings and Niemi's study challenges this idea. They found that high-school students' political attitudes differ vastly from those held by their parents.¹⁶ Family influence on direct political attitude transmission weakens as children mature and depend less on their parents. Their interactions are based more on teachers, friends, and community influence. Jennings and Niemi

suggest, however, that the party identification of parent and child remain strong, even while other political attitudes are acquired. 59% of a national sample of students "fall into the same broad category as their parents."¹⁷

The final piece of evidence Dawson and Prewitt utilize in defending their stance on the role of the family is looking at political orientations of youth from a one-parent family. Focusing on Kenneth Langton's famous study of political socialization patterns in Jamaica, they look at the comparison of youthful political attitudes in maternal families with that of youths in two-parent families.¹⁸ The precise consequences of 'father absence' or 'maternal families' is still unclear and is a matter of some controversy. Langton suggests, however, that consequences of 'father absence' can be found in the expression of political attitudes. He found that young males from maternal homes tend to exhibit more authoritarian tendencies and were less interested in politics and less politically efficacious than their peers from nuclear families.¹⁹ This appears to support Dawson and Prewitt's hypothesis of the supreme importance of the family but other studies have suggested that "percentage of female-

headed families is far more closely related to income level and the general dissatisfaction with the political system cannot therefore be universally ascribed to the role of the family but to differing political attitudes held by poor families."²⁰ The effects of poverty on political attitudes of youth will be dealt with briefly in the chapter dealing with sub-cultures later in the paper.

Little research exists on the role the family plays in influencing political attitudes of Canadian children. One small study was conducted by Elia T. Zurich on British Columbian children, and their parents, and will be used as a reference point in determining differences, if any, that may exist between American and Canadian families.²¹

J. A. Laponce tested political attitudes of Canadian adults.²² The findings of both studies appear to be congruent with studies of American families which show that the "home environment acts as a reinforcing element in fostering a favorable image of politics among the offspring."²³ When asked, "Do you believe that politics and politicians are bad?", 85% of the parents answered that they found it healthy for their children to ask them questions about politics and 77% said they sometimes read the newspapers

with their children. Ninety percent of the respondents answered positively when asked if they followed the newspaper accounts of governmental affairs, indicating a fair amount of interest by most parents.²⁴

Children were also questioned on feelings of nationhood, benevolency in regards to political authorities, and identification with national symbols. Findings were amazingly similar to comparable American studies. Although some differences did exist between French and English Canadians, (which will be discussed when we review sub-cultural differences in socialization), most Canadian children appear to develop early feelings of national identity and benevolent feelings towards the political system and its leaders.²⁵

Conclusion:

After examining the arguments which defend the importance placed on the family as a political socialization agent, I would have to agree with the conclusions reached by Jennings and Niemi; "It is clear that any model of socialization which rests on assumptions of parent to child value transmissions. . . is in serious need of modification."²⁶ That is not to diminish the role the family plays in the

socialization process, but perhaps to view it in proper perspective. The family plays an important role in determining basic orientations to the political system held by youth. Children appear to learn early from their parents basic beliefs about the nature of the world including the political sphere. The family has been shown to be most influential in instilling in children initial positive, efficacious feelings to the political system and in familiarizing children with national identity matters. This is indeed the fundamental support of any political system. The greatest and most enduring influence of parents appears to be how they affect the acquisition of basic feelings of national loyalty beliefs about the nature of the political world, and personality orientations of their children. Perhaps it is at this level of indirect socialization that research should be directed. The impact of the family is limited though, and other agents of socialization contribute to developing these basic orientations towards more sophisticated, direct, and cognitively based attitudes that youth need to understand the complex political system. The impact that other agents: the school, peer groups, and social milieu have in the acquisition of political attitudes will be examined in the subsequent chapters.

IV

THE SCHOOL AS AN AGENT OF SOCIALIZATION

The school is considered second only to the family in importance as an agent of socialization by most researchers. Some recent literature though, has challenged the supreme role of the family and has suggested that the school plays the most vital role in the political socialization process. In fact, Hess and Torney assert baldly that, "The public school is the most important and effective instrument of political socialization in the United States."¹ Regardless of the exact position of the school in our ordering of agents in importance and impact, the school plays a radically different role from the family in developing children's political attitudes. This chapter will deal not only with the role of the school in the socialization process, but it will also be devoted to analyzing its relative impact on the acquisition of politically relevant attitudes of children.

Unlike the subtle and persuasive role of the family, the role of the school is more limited and direct in its impact. According to Dawson and Prewitt the school is

linked to the development of political self in two distinct ways: "First, school entails political socialization experiences which shape the orientation of the pre-adult. . . providing instruction in appropriate political values. Secondly, a person's level of education affects his way of understanding the world of politics."² In order to clarify these two propositions, we will discuss the influence to the school by focusing on studies that deal with the direct influence of the school and on research dealing with differing political attitudes by level of education attained.

The Role of the Teacher

The school in North America is a very highly respected institution. In both Canada and the United States school is mandatory for children of ages five to sixteen. Like the role of the family, the school also assumes an authoritarian position over the child. The indirect impact of the presence of authority figures has been discussed by many political scientists, sociologists, and psychologists. Almond and Verba in their five-nation study found that "the non-political authority patterns to which an individual is exposed have an important effect on his attitudes towards political authority."³ Both the parent and the teacher represent

nonpolitical authorities and serve as a basic orientation to the adult world for the child. Both classroom and home atmosphere can range from democratic to authoritarian depending on the emphasis placed on rules and regulations and the amount of participation by children allowed and encouraged. Almond and Verba studied the differing rates of student participation allowed in the classroom among countries and ranked the countries according to their democratic atmosphere in their schools. The United States ranked higher than Britain, Germany, Italy, Mexico. This was in direct relation to the extent of democracy in each of the five nations according to their measure.⁴

In addition, "persons within each nation who recalled being able to participate in the classroom turned out to be more politically competent than those presumably unable to participate."⁵ This suggests the important indirect manner in which the schools can influence political competence and attitudes.

The role of the teacher as an authority figure, regardless of the degree of authoritarianism displayed, represents, in addition, a role-model of the power structure of society. The child learns to respect the authority and

trust their decision-making ability. This is extremely important in view of the results of the studies by Greenstein, Hess and Torney, and Dennis which found the children's first perceptions of political world is in personal terms.⁶ "The child's initial relationship with governmental authority is with the President, whom he sees in highly positive terms, indicating his basic trust in the benevolence of government. . .

The President is the major figure in the child's emerging world."⁷ All American studies seem to confirm this notion that in early years of school the child views the government in personal terms viewing the President as representative of 'government'. At early ages, most children are unable to comprehend the government as impersonal institutions, so they tend to view it as a personal authority figure which they can relate to and deal with their everyday lives such as teacher, the parent, or any adult.⁸ A majority of younger children also felt that the President is concerned with the individual, (Asked, if you write to the President, does he care what you think?), that he personally would help them if they needed it, and they chose the President as about the best person in the world.⁹ Hess and Torney's studies

revealed the general benevolent image the child holds for the government and the importance children place on the president as representative of what government is to them.¹⁰

As the American child matures and develops cognitively, he begins to see the President separate from the presidency and in terms of various institutions than individual leaders.¹¹ When asked "What is Government?", most eighth graders mentioned Congress, the Supreme Court, the Presidency and various other institutions but centered around the personal qualities of individuals.¹² When Hess and Torney asked "Who runs the country?", 86% of second graders replied the President. The percentage declined with each grade with only 58% of eighth graders replied the President, and 35% said Congress runs the country.¹³

Although older children no longer perceive government in extremely benevolent terms, they do perceive institutions of government as powerful and infallible.¹⁴ "Early belief in the benign qualities of political authority sets a level of expectations that is never completely abandoned."¹⁵ Institutions such as the Supreme Court, are regarded as more dependable than the President and less likely to make

mistakes.¹⁶ As a child learns more about the governmental process, and his role as a citizen, his conceptualization of government appear to change to accommodate his perceptions.

The final role of the teacher, I wish to discuss is that as a disseminator of socially accepted values. Though teachers are instructed not to express their own personal political views in class as a matter of ethics, they still transmit values that reflect the general atmosphere of the society. Talcott Parson speaks of the general 'learning culture' that exists in the educational process and its effects on the child's views of society.¹⁷ He speaks of the classroom as "a social system reflecting the larger social and political system."¹⁸ Not only is the North American child taught to be obedient to school rules, he is also taught to accept such norms as competition, equality, and 'differential achievement'.¹⁹ Many of these values taught in the classroom are indeed congruent with national norms, and we can expect them to be transferred to the general society as the child matures.

The School and National Loyalty

In the United States the school plays a vital role in the development of national identity and loyalty.

Although, most pre-schoolers were able to state their citizenship in positive terms, they were basically confused when further questioned on what a 'nation' actually is.²⁰ In American schools, daily rituals are performed to express loyalty to the nation. Every morning children in elementary schools pledge allegiance to the flag and often sing the national anthem and other patriotic songs. Most school holidays honor national heroes and events, and bulletin boards often display pictures of political figures. Unlike the subtle orientations of the family to the political world, the school plays a more direct role and children are taught collectively to display loyalty and identification with the nation.²¹ The United States is not the only country which appears to go to extremes in indoctrinating its children with support for the nation. This is also an important method of gaining support for Communist regimes in countries such as Cuba, The Soviet Union, and China.²²

Hess and Torney state that one of the most remarkable features of the American child's initial orientation to America is his positive feelings about his country and its symbols.²³ Ninety-five percent of second graders studied, agreed that the "American flag is the best country in the

world."²⁴ These attitudes of national attachment remain stable and relatively high in all grades that were studied indicating an over-all positive image of government.

"The concept of the nation acquires cognitive substance, including abstract qualities and ideological content as the child ages."²⁵ Children get more direct teaching of political importance as they proceed from grade to grade. While little direct teaching of political-related subjects is found in the elementary grades, history and government are often mandatory classes in American secondary schools, with many states requiring students to pass a test in the national and state constitutions. As the student acquires 'cognitive substance' through politically relevant subjects his political attitudes grow in sophistication.²⁶ Hess and Torney found that the older the child studied the more likely he is to express ideas of nationhood in abstract ideological forms.²⁷

Considerable attention has been devoted to childhood learning of politically relevant attitudes and behavior.²⁸ Most studies have attempted to answer this question of how attitudes develop by concentrating for the most part on young children. The rationale for researching this group is

based on two beliefs: first, that basic orientations towards politics are learned in early childhood and adolescence²⁹ and second, that this early socialization has important consequences for adult political behavior.³⁰

Jennings and Niemi found substantial development of attitudes and interests during and after adolescence in their study of parent-child attitude transmission, finding vast differences between them and suggesting agent-influence outside the family.³¹ Jennings and Langton in their study of the "relationship between the civics curriculum and political attitudes and behavior in American high schools,"³² found that high school civics courses are only weakly related to the white student being more likely than the black to be knowledgeable, interested in politics, to expose himself to the political content of the mass media, to have more political discourse, to feel more efficacious, and show more civic tolerance.³³ While the civics curriculum had little or no observable impact on white students, it had a substantial impact on blacks. In contrast to whites, whose knowledge did not increase noticeably after a civics course, blacks demonstrated increased knowledge of government with each civics course taken. Langton and Jennings account

for this finding by suggesting that the civics curriculum is redundant for whites, while largely new to blacks.

Whites entered these classes already possessing a high level of knowledge about government, while blacks were much less informed.³⁴

Adelson and O'Neill studied the concepts of community and discovered that notions of community do not appear fully until the age of 13.³⁵ Likewise, children over 15 perceive government in more frequent discussions among high-school students than among pre-adolescents.³⁶ We can conclude by saying that it appears that substantial development of political attitudes and interests grow during and after adolescence, but not always due to the direct role of the school suggesting that other agents such as peer groups or the mass media play a more substantial role in attitude development of youth.

Canadian Schools

No major research in the area of political development has been done in Canada. A. B. Hodgetts did a limited study of Grade 10 and 12 students across Canada and the effects, if any, that civic education had on the development of politically relevant attitudes. He indicates the majority of English-speaking high school graduates are without the

intellectual skills, the knowledge, and the attitudes they should have to play an effective role as Canadian citizens.³⁷ Hodgetts goes on to state;

The psychological or sociological motives for voting; the influence of the mass media, the roles of political parties, the effects of lobbying and pressure groups, the decision-making process, the importance of Bureaucracies, power elites and other factors that bring politics to life seldom get into the Canadian social-studies classroom."³⁸

Hodgetts has provided descriptive data about how he views the Canadian formation of politically relevant attitudes in young Canadians. He deals only with the school as an agent of socialization and his data on political learning is retrospective, focusing on teaching methods rather than actual contact with individual students. Some of his findings are important, revealing that most students are generally submitted to boring lectures and quizzes on facts and dates. Most schools utilized out-dated textbooks in Canadian history and outside reading was rarely encouraged. Discussions in class were rare and focused on past events never relating them to the present. The government was hardly criticized and current events were seldom discussed. Thus, students emerged from this system not only ignorant of their

country's history, but probably apathetic towards it as well. Only minimal support can be expected from training of this type.

A more empirically based study of Canadian youth was conducted by Jon Pammett in 1966 in the Kingston area of Ontario.³⁹ Analysis of his results focus not only on Canadian American differences in the development of political orientations, but also on children in public and separate schools. Social class differences were controlled. The study resulted in some interesting conclusions. When children were asked about the role the mayor, city council, provincial premier, prime minister, and the president of the United States play, the results showed that few of the children in younger grades understood any of the roles. As children grew older (grade 6, 7, 8), not only did they exhibit knowledge about the more personalized roles such as the prime minister, and president, but they also showed considerable understanding of the roles of many of the institutions of government. Although initial "development of political knowledge takes place at a much slower rate for Canadian than American children. . .it may be that support for the system is based on early knowledge about institutional objects as well as personalized ones which allows

more eventual switching in partisanship."⁴⁰ Although Canadian children appear to gain political knowledge and attitude-formation later in the adolescent years, their attitudes are based equally on personal and institutional roles. This appears to further question the importance of the role of the family, but it would have to be supported by additional research. Separate school children tended to be better informed than their public school counterparts which the author suggests may be due to the fact that certain political issues would be discussed more in the homes due to religious interest.

Party preferences were low for almost all the children tested regardless of age or grade of students suggesting that children do not appear to be socialized by their parents at young ages.⁴¹ Catholic children more often stated party preference, again suggesting religious influence in the separate schools. There was little awareness of the differences between Canadian parties, even at the eighth grade. "Since many political orientations are not found in elementary school age children studied here these orientations will either be formed later in life under the influence of agencies other than the

parents or not be formed at all."⁴² Although little research exists in this area of socialization much of the literature leans to support the idea that the incomplete socialization by the school results in weak feelings of national loyalty (and strong feelings of regional loyalty) and weak party preferences with many voters switching from election to election.

John C. Johnstone conducted a study of Canadian adolescents (ages 13-20) for the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism.⁴³ Although most of his data relate to ethnic or lingual differences of opinion, an overall picture is presented of Canadian youth. On direct questions related to loyalty, the respondents appear to be most supportive of the nation. Deeper questioning of youth on their perceptions of which level of government does the most for them, revealed astounding results. The negative opinion of the federal government by English, French and immigrant Canadians and their overriding preference for provincial governments raised doubts about the degree of support for the Canadian Government held by youth.⁴⁴ Similar results were found by Donald Smiley in his book Co-operative Federalism. He states that

there are five separate economic units in Canada and that there is little to be gained by bringing them to a common level.⁴⁵ Thus, Canada has adopted a kind of 'co-operative federalism.' Smiley is pessimistic about the repercussions this will have for federal unity and states, "Canada must integrate or disintegrate"⁴⁶ suggesting that regional powers must be centralized to create a federal outlook and unity and a true national identity.

Conclusions:

The school indeed plays a considerable role in the political socialization process in North America. Its influence is very different from that of the family, being more direct in its impact. The primary function of the school is to give cognitive backing to children's existing attitudes regarding the political process, and thus to clarify the political system of that society for them.

The school as a social system passes on and reinforces social norms of the society at large. The teacher represents a model authority that the child understands and relates to in his initial perception of the political process viewing it in individualistic terms in the United States. The Canadian children gain cognitive

knowledge of the political system at a later age and their initial understanding of the political world is in terms of the individual as well as institutional ones resulting equally to the role of the Prime Minister and parliament. Canadian schools tend to be less effective and influential as an agent of socialization. Children's national feelings of loyalty are found to be weak. The over-all results of this incomplete socialization appears to be that Canadian school children identify much more closely with regional interests than federal ones, and identification with one political party is unlikely, or weak. We find many voters switching continuously.

The school also plays a vital role in the development of national identity and international understanding. This appears to have more impact in the United States where daily rituals are devoted to displaying feelings of loyalty. Although, Canadian children display loyal feelings to the nation as a whole, by the time they reach adolescence they prefer provincial forms of government and sees them as most beneficial to the people undermining their loyalty to Canada as a whole. Positive feelings for national government appear to be stable in the United States throughout

development.

The school influences tend to be more limited as the child matures. I suggest that other agents have more influence on the development of political attitudes as the child reaches late adolescence. The next two chapters will deal with peer group influence, and the social milieu at large.

PEER GROUPS AND THE POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION PROCESS

Thus far we have examined and discussed the influence of two major agents of socialization, the family and the school. Although both play a vital role in the socialization process their impact and orientations are diverse. The family appears to be most influential in instilling in children basic positive orientations to the political systems such as feelings of national loyalty and party identification. United States studies have verified that most pre-school children are aware of their citizenship and may even state a party preference, but when further questioned they appear confused to what a 'nation' or a 'party' really is. The schools' most important contribution to the political socialization process is to give cognitive substance to children's initial perceptions of government. Many researchers have found that children's level of political sophistication increases with each year of schooling.¹ Most studies have focused on children between the ages of five and twelve. This emphasis is justified by findings that these early years are the

crucial, formative years of an individual's life and hence are vital in the acquisition of politically relevant attitudes and values. Jennings and Niemi's study, though, suggests that the school loses its influential impact on youth during the high school years. The civics curriculum they found had little or no impact on (white) high school students suggesting a redundancy in material presented which would thus have little influence on already acquired political feelings. Yet, they also found that parents' and high school seniors' attitudes were clearly different. Political socialization is a life-long process and political attitudes of people change over time. The influence of the family and school wane as the child approaches his adult years. Although both the family and the school can have vast influence on the political attitudes acquired, including long-range effects, their importance has been over-emphasized. Obviously, a focus on school age more readily facilitates observation and empirical analysis and as youths reach adult years they become involved with a vast network of different groups (friends, work associations, religious associations, etc.) all having the potential power to influence political opinions. It is difficult to study

this network of complex inter-relationships and estimate their effects on political-opinion formation. Consequently, few researchers have attempted to study peer groups, nonetheless a few important studies have been completed and their findings will be summarized and analyzed in this chapter.

Dawson and Prewitt define peer groups as a "form of primary groups composed of members sharing relatively equal status and close ties."² Peer group research most often focus on children play groups and social and religious affiliates. The relative importance of the peer groups often varies from culture to culture and their importance depends on the role other agents play.

Some political scientists have suggested the role and influence of peer groups is increasing in modern developing countries replacing parental influence and other authority figures.³ As the family structure changes in a mobile, technologically advanced social system, such as the North American countries, and family ties are loosened or severed altogether, parental influence on political attitudes of youth as they mature are minimal. "Unlike primitive societies, modern states are not based on kinship or other

personalized arrangements."⁴ "Because the political and social systems are not based on, or modeled after the family structure, the family is a less suitable training ground for participation in society."⁵ Therefore, as children mature peer groups offer closer ties to the individual and tend to play a more significant role in the socialization process in modern countries.

Peer group influence is strongest in the late adolescent and early adult years when the school and family influence is diminishing. Unlike the basic political orientations such as nationhood feelings which the family provides for youth in the socialization process, and unlike the cognitive substance to the process of political life which schools provide, peer groups have a much more sophisticated function. Socialization is a life long process and it "is not concluded with the acquisition of basic political attachments and knowledge."⁶ The adult years are, of course, politically more demanding. Not only are citizens expected to vote in governmental elections, but they are also expected to function within this social system as a whole which includes any politically related decisions.

Peer groups can have several effects on already established political attitudes. They can act to reinforce basic political orientations, and can supplement them "preparing the individual for more specific political experiences."⁷ Peer groups provide continuing cues through which individuals understand and adjust to everyday changes in the political world.⁸ Unlike earlier political experiences of childhood which consisted primarily of learning stable, statis benevolent images of political systems with little criticism of the process and requiring little active participation by youth, the adult years are, of course, much more demanding of citizens. Adults play a more active role in society and their responsibilities are increasingly growing. Not only are most adults subject to family and job responsibilities, they also are pressured to fulfill social responsibilities that are demanded of the adult in modern society which include interest and participation in politically related affairs. Support of political parties and leaders is expected of the adult political man. Identification with a political party, leaders, or even public policy appears to be based on identification and/or pressure from peer group affiliates. The church, work

colleagues, ethnic ties, and social ties can all contribute to and influence one's political attitudes. If these peer groups are supportive of early political orientation, political opinions will probably remain the same, but if peer groups present influences or demands which conflict with earlier formed political attitudes and beliefs, opinions will undoubtedly modify or change to accommodate new role-expectations. This change from earlier acquired political opinions and beliefs to accommodate new group pressure is referred to as "resocialization."⁹ Obviously, in a modern, mobile society where mobility is common, and peer groups are often changing and consequently role demands are also fluctuating, resocialization of political attitudes is apt to occur many times in an individuals' life time. A medical student who works construction in the summer will probably have greater diversity of peer groups and thus political attitudes, than a successful doctor who has his own practice and lives in a wealthy suburb. If this successful doctor is promoted to be the administrative head of a medical center, his peer groups will again change to accommodate his new position, as probably will his political opinions. When the doctor

retires his peer groups will again most probably change and new role demands may again modify his political outlook. "Given the extent and rapidity of change in the contemporary world this type of resocialization is widespread."¹⁰

Peer group influence is similar to the family in the indirect method of transmitting politically relevant attitudes. Unlike the family, peer groups often influence specific political opinions, issues, and public policies. The Catholic Church for example gives specific cues on issues such as birth control, abortion, and separate education. Professional colleagues may give cues to support or oppose mainly work-related issues in the political sphere. Although peer groups provide more specific cues to political issues, their influence is often not deliberate but is indirect with no centralizing organization dictating political opinions to be accepted. Friends and neighbours often associate socially and political discussions probably often occur, but they are only secondary to their main intention of building social inter-personal relationships.

Very few studies have been conducted on peer group influence. Much research exists that has implications for the influence of peer groups in the political socialization

process. Angus Campbell et.al. have examined the many factors that might influence how one votes and which party, leaders, and policies he supports. Peer group influence on politically relevant attitudes was found to be substantial. Campbell and associates found "non-voting as well as the direction of voting, tends to be shared behavior. . . ninety percent of the people whose friends did not vote were themselves non-voters."¹¹ Lane reports that "the more politically conscious are a person's friends and associates and fellow group members, the more likely he is to be politically conscious and active."¹² Lane suggests that belonging to a group satisfies basic inner needs and being isolated from a group can damage one's perception of self, so conformity to group norms is common and perhaps necessary. If membership of a group is extremely important to an individual, he will not jeopardize his position by accepting deviating beliefs and opinions contrary to the groups, political or otherwise.¹³ He further suggests that if group norms are not homogeneous with group divisions on most issues, their impact will be substantially lessened.

Branfenbreener conducted a study to examine peer group influence on children in a cross-cultural study of Soviet and American children. He focused only on twelve year old children. Presenting suggestions of deviating behaviour to set classroom rules, he found peer groups to play an important role in decisions children made.¹⁴ U.S. children when deciding as a group, decided to accept the suggestions of deviating behaviour. Soviet children collectively decided to dismiss the suggestions. He reported much influence by the group when decisions were collectively determined, but the decisional outcome accepted by the American children deviated from prescribed schoolrules, while the Soviet children adopted a decision to uphold the dictated rules.¹⁵

Peer groups play a vital role in the political socialization process. Their influence begins in the late adolescent years and increases into the adult years. They can affect political attitudes in many ways. If an individual tends to maintain status and peer group associates similar to his parents, peer groups will probably facilitate and support early political orientations. Most individuals

in the modern, complex, technological societies of North America experience mobility in their social-economic position in life, and tend to encounter many new peer group affiliates different from their parents and having diverse opinions and political beliefs. Resocialization of politically relevant attitudes occurs, and the individual modifies his political perceptions to correspond with peer group demands and influences.

Peer groups, like the family, are a primary group. Interpersonal relations and emotional ties often dominate these relationships. Day to day contact is also characteristic of many peer group affiliations. Peer groups are not formed normally to facilitate political discussion and dictate 'acceptable' political opinions and beliefs. Their influence is indirect but their impact can be substantial.

The true extent to which peer groups influence political attitudes has really not been determined. It has been suggested by the limited research that exists that peer groups do play a vital role in the political socialization, especially in the adult years. Many studies have suggested the need for group membership to fulfill the needs of 'self' image. The more one favourably relates

to a group, the more apt he is to hold the prominent group views, political or otherwise. Since much of our self-esteem is derived from acceptance by others, we often do not deviate from group norms and beliefs which jeopardize position in that group.

Political socialization is a life long process. Political attitudes (aside from party i.d.) change over time and peer group variations appear to account for some of these changes. Much research is needed in this area, however, if we are to understand the role peer groups play and support the above hypothesis. Discussions of political socialization without knowledge of the role peer groups play are really incomplete and will not be sophisticated until more complete, longitudinal studies exist.

VI

SOCIAL MILIEU AND POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION

Political scientists have been most attentive to the family and school as the main agents of political socialization. Not only are these institutions almost universally regarded as the most crucial forces in shaping political attitudes and values but as established, well-defined structures their impact can be observed and evaluated as an agent of socialization. It is apparent, however, that these three agents of socialization are not the only ones shaping political attitudes; the environment or immediate surroundings in which one lives is also an important socializing force.¹

The social milieu or environment seems capable of affecting the socialization process in many ways. Many political events occur at the local level and often local government is well reported by the media. The environment may reinforce attitudes introduced in school by providing confirmation of the image and performance of government the civic curriculum provides. It can also act in direct contradiction to the benevolent image of government

portrayed by the school and by the family as well. It may also affect the content of socialization provided by both home and school as these agents prepare youngsters for the peculiar demands of community life. In view of these various ways in which the environmental setting can affect the socialization process, it is surprising that so little effort has been made at systematic exploration of the environmental impact on attitude formation.

Different surroundings can result in very different perceptions of self and government.² In some instances the view of government as benevolent and responsive is severely challenged as less fortunate children begin to grasp the reality of their surroundings. Obviously a child in the rich suburbs of the city who will undoubtedly go to the best schools, including college, and will probably in his adult years hold equal or better socio-economic status than his parents will have different perceptions of the political system than a poor child living in ghetto housing, going to inferior schools, probably dropping out and living the remainder of his life working as unskilled labor. Their different perceptions of the world is not solely a simple

difference of socio-economic status. The differences in their environments are real and very much affect their perceptions of society. "These pictures in turn will affect notions of political efficacy, alienation, civic duty. . .affecting political behavior."³

Sub-Cultures

Almond and Powell refer to political socialization as "the process by which the child learns about the political culture in which he lives."⁴ How one is socialized can vary from culture to culture, as well as from sub-culture to sub-culture. Perceptions of how attentive a government is to an individuals needs can influence feelings of efficacy and create sense of civic duty or it can create feelings of alienation and cynicism about the nature of the political system.

The family and school portray the governmental system in benevolent and idealistic terms. Research on school age children illustrate that children's initial perceptions are expressed in these idealistic and favourable terms. Whether these favourable pictures of the political system persist into adult year depends if the image of government conveyed by the family and schools corresponds

with the reality of the environmental milieu an individual lives in.⁵ If the image is in sharp contrast with reality it can result in serious erosion of trust or faith of the governmental system. Joan Lawrence asserts in this regard that attempts at "conscious socialization through formal education will be effective only to the extent that what is being taught or promulgated corresponds to the reality that the subject perceives around him. Programs to teach children about the importance and goodness of law and order will be effective only if the children's own experiences do not conflict with what is being taught or what parents teach."⁶

Black Americans and French Canadians constitute two of the larger, most visible and perhaps most complex of the sub-cultures existing today in North America. They are sub-cultures because their needs, desires, and aspirations are different from the mainstream of society as are the experiences, and opportunities open to them to achieve their goals. Environmental differences have been suggested by some researchers to be paramount in explaining the differing political attitudes held by these minority groups.

Only in recent years has attention been devoted to comprehending and evaluating the political attitudes and perceptions of minority groups. Although specific findings reported are few and fragmented, they may be highly significant to our understanding of the political socialization process.

Roberta Siegel suggests that differences in treatment of subgroups by government can affect their perceptions of the political system. Looking at the total rejection of accepted political values by Black Muslims she asserts that: "The more disadvantaged the citizen, that is, the less access he is given to the values of society and the more he is treated as an inferior, the more likely that he will not become fully socialized into the ongoing political norms and that he will either remain on the outside, passive and alienated, or he will actually because of this alienation, become resocialized to a different political value system."⁷ In recent years we have seen a rise in political concerns by both black Americans and French Canadians. Where in the past these groups tacitly accepted their powerlessness in not only affecting political decisions but in receiving fewer political beliefs, these two groups have made strong

efforts to correct their subordinate status in society. The 'silent revolution' and the rise of black militancy, suggest that resocialization of benevolent images of government has occurred, and new political attitudes and values are being adopted by these groups.

Black America

Many black Americans live in the slum dwellings of the urban setting. With the rise of the model city programs, many major cities in the United States have high-rise, low income housing where many poor blacks reside. With the concentration of poor blacks in one area most neighboring homes have been sold or abandoned and presently exist as slum dwellings as well. Thus, in major cities blacks live isolated from whites and concentrated in one major area. David Schultz suggests that the impact of this environment has resulted in a 'ghetto socialization' of blacks, which lead to many of the mass movements in recent years.⁸ Kenneth Clark views the ghetto as separated from the rest of society by an invisible but real wall, with its inhabitants having little contact with the outside world.⁹ The internal demands of a society such as the ghetto, are clearly different from the demands of other

environments. Clark suggests that mere survival preoccupies the lives of many inhabitants of the ghetto, and perceptions of government accordingly is one of lack of concern about blacks, and in direct opposition to the needs and wants of this sub-culture. This lack of efficacious feelings is further suggested by James Coleman who found that "black communities lack the social cohesion and trust in people that normally characterize communities,"¹⁰ they therefore transfer this lack of trust to the political system. This lack of trust and cohesion deprives the community of the ability to make effective demands on external social institutions, resulting in internal constraints. Although many blacks have participated in mass movements, and are increasingly gaining political powers, they have been granted only small concessions. Legislative gains have been made, but they only assure blacks of the right to vote and equal opportunity in society. A tour of any major city in the U.S. will illustrate that this is not enough. Human beings, isolated from the rest of society, living in slum housing, granted only minimal inferior education, living in broken homes, and subject to the drug pushers and criminals representing an 'easy out' to the reality of such sub-human

conditions will not result in a group of people holding benevolent and trusting images of the political system.

Schy Lyon attempted to study children's sense of political efficacy by comparing the political attitudes of black and white children from the model city's area of Toledo with black and white children from suburban areas.¹¹ He found that, regardless of where they lived, black children were more cynical and felt less efficacious than whites, but children who lived in the inner city slums had become more cynical and less efficacious than children living elsewhere.¹² Thus, not only does race have an impact on the attitudes of children, but environment too plays a substantial role.

A. H. Singham conducted a study of the political socialization of marginal groups, and found profound differences in all attitudes held by black and white children.¹³ He suggests that blacks are similar to other colonized groups he studied:

The Parallel of the situation of the American Negro and the colonized are strikingly similar in many ways and indeed many of the slogans and rallying cries of the civil rights movement bear testimony to this realization by the Negro himself. One of the consequences of the dependency induced in the Negro by the system has been his perception of government. Like the colonial, his attitude toward government is often negative. The government is

both benefactor and oppressor: the two agencies of government that he has the most contact with, are welfare agencies and law enforcement officers, most of whom are white, thus encouraging a 'we-they' concept of government. Thus, not only does he not develop a feeling as a responsible citizen, but he is also ambivalent about "politics," especially since he feels his participation is not likely to result in "capturing" the government. It is this feeling of helplessness that often leads him to conclude that change can only be brought about by violence, not through established channels.

Black America clearly constitutes a sub-culture of the United States and political attitudes of blacks are substantially different from the views of the majority of white citizens. Precisely how attitudes are acquired and what role the agents of socialization play has not been studied to date. Without adequate research, I am unable to determine the exact process of political socialization of sub-cultures. It is in an area of study that has long been ignored and research is clearly warranted in this field if we are to truly understand the socialization process.

French Canada

Several studies have been conducted to determine the differences in political opinion that exists between

English and French Canadians, but none appear to be concerned directly with the question of political socialization. Like blacks in America, French Canadians represent a sub-culture. They are in a minority position and have been under-represented in the political system since the founding of Canada. Like blacks, French Canadians live apart from the rest of society, residing mainly in Quebec. Their differences from English Canadians are readily apparent, and although it is not a question of color, language differences do isolate this ethnic group.

Canada has recently recognized the rights of French Canadians to maintain their cultural identity as well as national feelings, and have commissioned several studies to examine questions of bilingualism and biculturalism. John C. Johnstone conducted a national opinion survey of Canadian youth and his findings are certainly suggestive of the sharp cultural cleavages that exist in Canada today.¹⁴

Some of his more important findings are:

1. Francophones showed a much greater propensity than either Anglophones or 'others' to define Canada in terms of its provinces.
2. While English youth viewed Canada very much an open class society. . . French youth people hold a more qualified view of the openness of Canadian society and were more likely to stress the importance of social background in terms of mobility.

3. In regards to the need for bilingualism, Francophones rated this as increasingly important as they aged, while among the Anglophones the opposite trend prevailed.
4. Strong regional differences were found in young peoples attitudes to different governmental bodies, Quebec youth more than Anglophones, although all promoted provincial interests.
5. All groups of young people felt that English-French differences of opinion about Canada's future posed a relatively great threat to national unity.

These negative political attitudes to the federal government appear to increase with age among both Francophones and Anglophones.¹⁵ French Canadians are more profoundly anti-federal government, than any other group in Canada, and show greatest preference for provincial government.

Wayne Reilly did a study of political attitudes among law students in Quebec hypothesizing that since law students represent the elite of Quebec they therefore are apt to have more access to political decision making powers. Although his sampling was small, his findings are significant for the over-all question of the stability of the Canadian political system. Again, Francophones were found to identify more closely with Quebec and express discontent with the Federal government. The federal government was seen as "economically necessary for Quebec but not otherwise

desirable."¹⁶ French Canadians did not see the Canadian government as committed to biculturalism and bilingualism, and not honestly concerned with Quebec's well being.

Both Johnstone's and Reilly's studies suggest that French Canada is indeed a separate culture from English Canadians. Their political attitudes and desires are indeed different from their English counterparts. Again, I am forced to point to the inadequacy of research on the political attitude formation of French Canadians as it relates to the political socialization process. Only when we understand how differing political opinions and beliefs are acquired can we attempt to correct these obvious inadequacies.

Both the French Canadian and black movement have gained much impetus in the last decade. As these attempts to acquire equal representation in the political process gain legitimization, cleavages become more distinct. Both movements can create stronger, more representative nations, or they can result in creating deeper divisions in society that will weaken the nation and perhaps even result in its break-up. The political socialization process can only instill in people the attitudes and beliefs the current

society holds. If a sub-culture no longer feels it can have any effect on the political system, or feels cynical and alienated towards its government, we are justified in being sceptical about the stability of that system. Only when we understand where the inadequacies exist and where these negative feelings come from can we attempt to correct them and insure by doing so a stable and lasting form of government.

VII

SES, INTELLIGENCE, AND SEX-RELATED DIFFERENCES

Political socialization is a complex process. The acquisition of political attitudes does not take place in a vacuum. Thus far we have examined the relative impact and effect of the family, schools, peer groups, and social environment in this process. Although they appear to play the major roles in the political socialization process, there are still some differences in political attitudes that are not accounted for. Much research exists examining the differences of politically related opinions by socio-economic status, intelligence, and sex differences.

SES

Investigations of the implications of socio-economic status on political attitudes have repeatedly shown social class differences "both for political party and candidates and in the degree of political involvement manifested in voter registration, voting in elections, and political participation in general."¹ These are the findings Hess and Torney discovered when they tested the effects of social class on political attitudes. Several other researchers

reached similar conclusions. Greenstein found that "upper class children made more references to political issues and their political attitudes were much more flexible, being expressed in less absolute terms."² Converse et.al., found that youth of higher status had stronger feelings of citizen duty, efficacy, and desire to participate.³ Lane reported that "high status sometimes implants attitudes of social and civic responsibility in persons who enjoy this status,"⁴ explaining that children of higher status are taught that with the privileges ascribed to them, certain responsibilities must be fulfilled.

All American researchers found that social status had little or no effect on the question of basic political orientations in regard to "basic attachment to the nation and in general acceptance of law and authority."⁵ The basic feelings of national loyalty appear to be reinforced by all agents regardless of social position in society.

Dawson and Prewitt reached strikingly similar results in their socialization study focusing on the effects social class had on political attitudes. Conducting a more thorough and longitudinal study of socialization,

they found new implications of social class not previously discussed. Lower class families and schools in less privileged areas, they assert, teach orientations to the political system different from their wealthier counterparts.⁶ Lower class primary groups tend to be more authoritarian, demanding obedience and respect from youth, while higher status primary groups tend to question and explain to children matters of discipline and authority. Thus, Dawson and Prewitt concluded that upper class children accept authority figures and the political system in general, but in less absolute terms than their lower class neighbours.

We can conclude by saying that socio-economic status does not directly influence political attitudes, but it indirectly has an effect on political behavior and opinions. Upper class youth tend to adopt strong national feelings just as lower status children do, but they also tend to feel more inclined to participate politically, express a stronger sense of obligation of citizen duty, and feel more efficacious towards the political system. They understand the political system in less absolute terms and tend to be

more flexible in their political attitudes. It has been suggested that upper class citizens have more direct interest in the political system as they are in a position to gain more. They are also training realistically for the position they may some day assume in the actual decision-making positions of the political system. Upper status inhabitants live in a much different environment than their lower class counterparts. Wealthy suburbs facilitate an atmosphere of positive government action that is more readily observed. Socio-economic status, as we will discuss in the remainder of this chapter, is sometimes directly related to level of intelligence. How these two combinations affect political beliefs and opinions will be dealt with next.

Intelligence

Little research has been conducted in the area of how the intelligence of an individual affects how he is politically socialized. As political socialization is a learning process we would expect that level of intelligence can have marginal effects on political learning. Hess and Torney have done major research in this area and report that, "the intelligence of the child is one of the most

important mediating influences in the acquisition of political behavior."⁷ Differences in political attitudes exist between children of high IQ scores and low. The stages of political learning, or the ages at which certain political phenomena are understood and expressed by children, also differed by IQ variations.

"In general the effect of high IQ is to accelerate the process of political socialization for children of all social status levels."⁸ This is the major finding of Hess and Torney in their study of American children in grades two to eight. Not only did children with higher IQ scores see sooner the political system as composed of various institutions, rather than a collection of benevolent authority figures, they also expressed political opinions in more realistic, sophisticated terms. Children of higher intelligence see the governmental system as a flexible system and accept the notion of change in government more readily than their less intelligent counterparts; they express less idealistic ideas about the system, realistically expecting less from it.⁹ These feelings are not to be confused with alienation or negative opinions towards political system, because children of higher intelligence were found to be

more likely to participate in political decisions, feel more obliged to vote, and in general express more efficacious feelings towards the political regime.¹⁰

Children of higher intelligence were found by Greenstein, to listen more to politically relevant media and "express concern about questions that are of contemporary interest to adults."¹¹

Who are these children of higher intelligence? Is there an equal proportion of children of higher intelligence in both the upper and lower stratas of the population? These are the questions many researchers attempted to answer in order to explain the effects of intelligence on political beliefs. Hess and Torney, Greenstein, and Lane all agree that more children of higher socio-economic-status scored higher on the IQ tests¹² than children of lower status. The combination of high status and intelligence in society tends to create therefore individuals with more sophisticated political attitudes, more realistic outlooks, and deep feelings of efficacy about the political system. Litt found in his early study of political socialization that students in different

communities were being trained to play different political roles.¹³ Upper middle class students were being orientated toward a realistic and active view of the political process, while working class students were being moved toward a more idealistic or passive view. Thus, social status, intelligence, and social environment appear collectively to affect the political attitudes held by individuals in society today.

Recent questioning of the validity of intelligence tests tends to discredit somewhat the assertion that level of intelligence is an indicator of varying political beliefs. It is not the intention of this paper to prove or disprove this theory, but rather we must consider and recommend this question for further study.

Sex

Sex is also considered to be a mediating influence on politically relevant attitudes.¹⁴ Women and men have consistently exhibited differences in political opinions in most research on the socialization process. Herbert Hyman conducted a study to deal with this question and found significant differences in the attitudes of boys and girls.¹⁵ He attributes these differences to different sex role

conceptions, child-adult relationships, and peer relationships, all of which take different forms and substance for boys and girls.¹⁶ Boys, Hess and Torney state, acquire political attitudes sooner than girls and have more interest in political matters.¹⁷ Stouffer found that women are less tolerant of political religious non-conformity.¹⁸ Lane states that women communicate less with their elected representatives, and feel in general politically competent only at the local level.¹⁹ At the mass level, women were found less likely to engage in the whole range of activities available to the politically interested citizen.²⁰

All of these 'landmark' studies on sex differences affecting political attitudes and behaviors are based on the conceptualization of sex roles by individuals and all were conducted prior to 1967. Further research is needed to determine if these sex-related differences still exist, and how recent changes in the concept of the role women play in society have altered political perceptions and differences. Women have been most attentive in the last decade to the defining of their role in society and this effort has had repercussions on political attitudes and beliefs.

VIII

CONCLUSIONS

It has been the intention of this thesis to review and analyze the literature on political socialization and to attempt to suggest an overall view of the process as it relates to Canada and the United States. By focusing on the various agents of socialization which seem to transmit or lead to the development of political loyalties, beliefs, values, attitudes and opinions it is my belief that this will lead us to a better understanding of how youth are socialized politically.

In reviewing the literature we found that political socialization is a learning process that appears to take place in all societies. It is a developmental process and is affected by both direct and indirect political learning as well as by indirect social learning, all contributing to the development of the political self. Political socialization is not a simple transfer of political attitudes and beliefs, and changes in political attitudes do occur. To explain why these changes take place let us summarize the role of each agent of socialization.

The major hypothesis of the paper is that the family, as an agent of socialization, is not the most important

and influential agent affecting the acquisition of political attitudes. After analyzing the available data it was found that the role of the family has, indeed, been overstated. The family does, though, play a vital role in the political socialization process. Not only does it generally serve to provide basic positive, efficacious orientation to the political system which insures stability of the government but it is also vital in providing cues that result in strong identification with the nation and its symbols. The family therefore is prominent in instilling in youth positive feelings towards the government and the nation as a whole. These basic loyalties, beliefs, and attitudes appear too durable and stable and they serve an important function in serving as a reference point from which political phenomena is evaluated, either being accepted if conforming to the basic loyalties, beliefs and attitudes or rejected if they do not. The family influences are often indirect and it is less important as a direct transmitter of politically related attitudes or as a teacher of how the political system functions.

The role of the school in the political socialization process is radically different from that of the family. The school tends to play a more influential role directly or indirectly transmitting information about the political

system. In American schools daily rituals are performed to express loyalty to the nation with children pledging allegiance and singing the national anthem daily. Children are taught collectively to display loyalty and identification with the nation. These attitudes of national attachment remain relatively stable and high in all grades over time.

The primary function of the school as a socialization agent is to give cognitive understanding to childrens already existing attitudes, beliefs, and loyalties regarding the political process. Children receive more direct teaching of political importance as they proceed from grade to grade. As the student acquires cognitive substance through politically relevant subjects his political attitudes and opinions grow in sophistication.

The school also acts as a social system passing on and reinforcing social norms of the society at large. Like the parent, the teacher represents a model of authority that the child understands and relates to in his initial perception of the political process viewing it in individualistic terms in the United States. The Canadian children seem to gain cognitive understanding of the political system at a later age and their initial understanding of the political world is expressed in terms of individuals as

well as institutions. The Canadian schools appear to play a less influential role and are weak in their transmission of positive images of the national political system. Although the literature is sparse and limited in analyzing the school as a transmitter of politically relevant attitudes, it tends to suggest that because the school in Canada is less influential in influencing political beliefs, loyalties of Canadian youth tend to favor regional identities and partisan support is weak with note-switching being common.

The school and the family play important roles in instilling in youth basic, positive, general beliefs, attitudes, and opinions and cognitive understanding of the political system. General and idealistic in nature, these orientations often do not correspond with the reality of the dynamic, political world.

Political socialization is a life long process and it is not concluded with the acquisition of basic political attachments and knowledge. Political attitudes and opinions develop and change over time. The influence of the family and school wane as the child approaches adulthood. The adult years are politically more demanding. Citizens are expected to vote in governmental elections

and to function within the social system as a whole making many politically related decisions.

Peer groups can act to reinforce already acquired political orientation or they can supplement them preparing individuals for more specific political experiences. Peer groups, or primary groups composed of members sharing relatively equal status and close ties, provide cues through which individuals understand and adjust to everyday changes in the political world.

The true extent to which peer groups influence political attitudes has really not been determined. The literature that exists suggest that they do play a fundamental role in the socialization process, especially in the adult years. Group membership satisfies the basic needs of 'self'. The more one favourably relates to a group, the more apt he is to hold the prominent group views. More longitudinal and complete studies are required, though, before we understand the exact impact of peer groups of the acquisition of political attitudes.

The social milieu or environment also appears capable of playing a significant role in the political socialization process. Many political events occur at the local level and they are regularly reported by the media.

The social system in which one lives can act to reinforce the benevolent image of government portrayed by the family and the school. Different surroundings can result in very different perception of self and government. The exact impact of the environment has not been determined and virtually little or no research exists in the area. Further research is indeed warranted. The literature that exists suggests that if the environment is favourable it can act to reinforce attitudes introduced by the family and the school. If it is not, alienation or cynicism will probably result.

Black Americans and French Canadians exist as sub-cultures in the North American continent. Existing almost as separate cultures they often express negative political attitudes suggesting inadequacies in the political system and tend to weaken the stability of that system. The needs, desires, and aspirations of these sub-cultures appear to be different from the mainstream of society as are the experiences and opportunities open to them to achieve their goals. Incomplete socialization or resocialization explains why negative attitudes and perceptions of the political

system are held by most members of these sub-cultures but exactly how these attitudes are acquired has not been clearly determined. Again, I urge further research in this area; it is clearly warranted and vital if we are to hope for stable governmental systems in North America.

Socio-economic status appears to indirectly influence political behavior and opinions. Upper class youth tend to adopt strong national feelings just as lower status children do, but they also tend to feel more inclined to participate politically and express a stronger sense of obligation of citizen duty. They also express more efficacious feelings toward the political system and tend to view it from a more flexible perspective.

Socio-economic status appears to be related to level of intelligence. Often children with the combination of higher socio-economic status and intelligence express political opinions in more realistic, sophisticated terms than their counterparts. They are more likely to participate in political decisions, feel more obliged to vote, and in general express more efficacious feelings toward the political regime. Upper class children appear to be trained

to adopt a more realistic and active view of the political system while working class children are moved toward accepting a more idealistic and passive view. Children of high socio-economic status generally score highest on intelligence tests, than their less fortunate counterparts. The questioning of the validity of the intelligence tests casts doubts on these findings though and research is badly needed.

Sex differences in political attitudes held by youth appear to be significant. Females appear to adopt more passive roles toward the political system and often express only minimal local interest. The studies that exist were conducted in the early 1960's and further research is needed to determine if these sex differences still exist and if recent changes in the concept of the role women play in society have altered political perceptions and aspirations.

Much research is needed in the area of political socialization before we can reach concrete understandings of how the process function. It has been the intention of this paper to suggest an overall picture of how political attitudes are acquired and develop. But it is clear that

there are many gaps in our knowledge making our statements necessarily tentative until further research provides us with more conclusive and extensive findings.

IX

FOOTNOTES

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