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THE REBIRTH OF POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION

Research on political socialization began in the late 1950s and died a premature death in the 1970s. The field atrophied because it was based on exaggerated premises and because of misinterpreted and misunderstood research findings (and lack of findings). In this article we review the field's origins and downfall with an eye toward its rebirth in a new and sustainable form.

Rebirth is possible only if the problematic premises and findings are confronted directly and are replaced by a more appropriate understanding of the field. To this end, we review the underlying premises and highly visible "findings," discarding and refuting as appropriate. We argue that political socialization research should eschew most studies of young children and, instead, focus on political learning in the years of most rapid change to adultlike learning capacities and adult attitudes. This period--roughly between the ages of fourteen and twenty-five--is also the time in which this society concentrates most of its citizenship-training endeavors. We also encourage greater attention to political learning in schools and to the changing content, media, and context of school education. In addition, we alert readers to the growing interest in socialization research elsewhere in the world and to the existence of related studies of the late adolescent-young adult period in the United States. Finally we offer a number of specific suggestions for redevelopment of the field, including a greater emphasis on comparative studies and more frequent secondary analysis of and direct involvement in ongoing U.S. studies.

We begin with the birth and death of socialization research, recounting a few of the actors, but mostly emphasizing the ideas that underlay and eventually undermined the field. [1]

THE RISE AND FALL OF A FIELD OF STUDY

Research on political socialization began in the late 1950s as part of a broader shift in the focus of political science research to political behavior. Among other developments, there was increasing awareness that political behavior was learned behavior. Politics was not, in Herbert H. Hyman's words, "an abrupt event of adult life, quite different from other

developmental processes that had been studied again and again" (1959, 18). No switch was flipped on at age twenty-one, changing young people from completely apolitical to completely political beings. Awareness and participation did not begin only, or immediately, as one attained adulthood. Some political learning occurred among preadults; indeed, civics and government courses in schools, along with the "practice" of democracy in school organizations, were intended precisely to foster such learning. Moreover, not everyone became political on their twenty-first birthday. Well before the 1950s, for example, it was known that voting turnout was especially low among young adults (e.g., Tingsten 1937). The important point was that political behavior, or at least the attitudes underlying such behavior, appeared to begin prior to formal adulthood. In the search for the antecedents of political behavior, it seemed obvious that one had to begin the search in adolescence or even in early childhood.

Researchers soon began to find what Hyman called "pre-cursive" forms of political attitudes and behavior in very young children. This, as well, should not have been surprising. Pictures of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, which seem to grace every restored nineteenth-century schoolroom, were put there for a reason; young people were to learn about U.S. political history and to develop positive attitudes about our greatest leaders. As R. W. Connell put it with respect to his country (Australia), "one group of political matters--the symbols of nationality, Queen, flag, and anthem--is known to nearly all, as it is deliberately taught in the infants' school" (1971, 17). But not only patriotism was learned early. Psychologists were learning about children's views of "foreign" nations (Jahoda 1963) and about their images of race (Stevenson and Stuart 1958), not insignificantly, at a time of a great prominence of race issues in the adult political world. Once researchers began asking, they also found that some children as young as six to nine years old could articulate feelings about political parties (e.g., Greenstein 1965, ch. 4; Hess and Torney 1967, 90; Easton and Dennis 1969, 195-98)--precursors, it seemed, to future party identification.

These studies were fascinating and often had amusing twists.[2] The problem, however, was in trying to determine their long-term significance. Here, socialization research fell victim to two assumptions that are, at best, highly questionable. First, it was assumed that what was learned prior to adulthood remained unchanged later in life. This "primacy" principle was most explicit in political science with respect to partisanship. The conclusion in *The American Voter* that the "picture [is] characterized more by stability than by change--not by rigid, immutable fixation on one party rather than the other, but by a persistent adherence and a resistance to contrary influence" (Campbell et al. 1960, 146) became caricatured into the view that party identification was very nearly immutable both between generations and across lifetimes. Yet even as socialization work was getting up a full head of steam, the first cracks in this assumption were appearing, as the number of independents underwent a significant increase in the late 1960s.

Now, of course, we are aware that partisanship fluctuates systematically in response to economic conditions and that it changes idiosyncratically in response to individual attitudes about the president and contemporary political issues (Florina 1981; Franklin and Jackson 1983; Weisberg and Smith 1991; MacKuen et al. 1989; Niemi and Jennings 1991).³ Partisanship is relatively stable, but there is certainly no justification for capturing it at its earliest manifestation and assuming that it will persist through adulthood.

It soon became obvious that other major orientations changed over individual lifetimes as well. Levels of political trust, for example, declined in the 1960s at such a rate and in such a way that the change could not be explained on the basis of generational replacement (Miller 1974, 957). Nonetheless, certain values were presumed to be unchanging. Sometimes this view was only implicit, as in Hess and Torney's discussion of national allegiances, in which they remarked that "feelings of attachment do not call for a response; the citizen does not expect something from the country in return for his allegiance" (1967,31). Here was the intimation that attachment to one's nation would not waver because citizens ask nothing in return for their allegiance. At other times the perspective was more explicit: "Many attitudes, concepts, and types of involvement

approximate toward the end of the eighth grade the attitudes and orientations of the teachers" (Hess and Torney 1967, 220), suggesting that little change was to be expected beyond about age thirteen.

Though some orientations may, in fact, be highly stable over long periods of time,[4] few theoretical or empirical efforts were (or have been) made to distinguish the stable from the changeable. Not that such work is easy. There are few long-term panels, and even when someone does manage to carry one out, it is difficult to design measures that faithfully capture the same concepts over periods of many years.[5] Thus, to some degree we have to content ourselves with assumptions about the stability of political orientations. But that is no reason to assume uncritically and without continuing efforts at substantiation that most or all ideas learned early in life--or even those that seem "basic" in some sense--survive intact all the buffeting associated with the transition to adulthood and all of later life's confrontations with the political world. To have done so, even for a short time, was to assure dismissal of much of the work done by socialization researchers.

Second, early learning was assumed uncritically--even when it did not persist in unaltered form--to have a significant influence on later life. Perhaps most problematic was that all early learning was considered important, even learning occurring very early in life. The idea that spread was that what is learned earliest is most important. Thus, what seven and eight year olds learn about authority (e.g., that the queen is the ruler of Britain) is necessarily important--even if those views are so obviously incorrect that the most ill-informed adults would reject them. In addition, no differentiation was made across subject matter. With respect to its effect on later life, early learning about partisanship was presumably on a par with early learning about nationality and race.

This assumption is much more difficult to deal with than the assumption of attitudinal stability. Is early learning important? We doubt that there will be a satisfactory answer in the near future. In part, this is because of the difficulty, already noted, of conducting long-term panel studies. But even supposing we could interview young children and then follow them for thirty years or more, it would not be easy to sort out the influence of early learning from the impact of all of the intervening thoughts and actions. The thought of conducting several such panels--to assure variation in initial social and political conditions--boggles the mind. And the alternative of relevant, feasible experimental research is even more problematic. Imagine trying to convince a human-subjects review board that an experimental group of four year olds should be taught to dislike the policeman and president to learn what effect it has on their later lives.

Despite the absence of consistent proof about long-term effects, in contexts outside of political science research (but sometimes related to politics) we as a society often act on the assumption that early learning is very important. Proponents of the Head Start program, producers and fans of Sesame Street and Mister Rogers' Neighborhood, and many others presumably believe that early exposure is of considerable consequence for mental, and perhaps moral, development. The emphasis on family structure by former Vice President Dan Quayle, Senator Pat Moynihan, and others seems to rest on a similar assumption. Likewise, the debate about violence on children's television programs makes sense only if childhood learning has some bearing on later values and behavior. Breaking the cycle of family violence-- indeed, thinking that there is a "cycle"--rests on the assumption that what proadults experience directly affects them later on. Psychologists do have a basis for some of these assumptions. Yet to accept across the board that all proadult learning is equally important goes too far. The concept of early learning requires differentiation. It may be that learning about race before the age of six is significant for later life but that learning about partisanship before age fourteen is basically irrelevant.

Serious questioning about the direct effects of early learning can be traced in part to Searing, Schwartz, and Lind's (1973) apparent demonstration of very weak connections between "basic" political values or personality traits and adults' "issue beliefs" or positions on policy mat-tots. Surprisingly, this conclusion has gone largely unchallenged by specialists in socialization, even though in other contexts there have been numerous

articles about poor scaling efforts, problematic question types, and random measurement errors, which might account for the low correlations they observed.[6]

Recently, however, there has been a resurgence in studies that make use of general orientations. Throughout these studies, authors make note of the connections between general values and adult attitudes and behavior. Hurwitz and Peffley (1990), for example, concluded that patriotism is one of several "core" values underlying attitudes toward U.S. foreign policies. Owen and Dedrick (1989) found that patriotism was significantly related to a number of current domestic policy issues. Sullivan, Fried, and Dietz (1992) and Shanks and Miller (1991) provided evidence that patriotism was related to voting in the 1988 presidential campaign. With respect to citizenship, Theiss-Morse (1993) showed that a number of strong relationships are found between individual views on citizenship and several forms of participation.[7] These results suggest that what Searing, Schwartz, and Lind (1973) called the "structuring principle" may be valid after all,[8] though they do not demonstrate that childhood experiences relating to nationalism and citizenship contribute to, much less are determinative of, adult conceptions.[9]

Because of the difficulty of assessing early learning and determining its significance, our view is that political scientists should be cautious about studying most political topics with children under fourteen as subjects. For children in preadolescence, many political concepts are either overly complicated or not in their realm of interest. By late adolescence, young people have adultlike capabilities--that is, "the capacity to reason consequentially, to trace out the long-range implications of various courses of action . . . a readiness to deduce specific choices from general principles" (Adelson and O'Neil 1966, 302). If studies of younger children are to be undertaken by political scientists, special consideration should be given to the question of their significance.

Nonetheless, there may be social and political circumstances in which studying young children is worthwhile. Instances that come to mind are those in which children are caught up in adult activities such as ethnic conflicts, neighborhood gang wars, or civil war. What happens to children in situations such as these well might leave an indelible impression. A steady, unmediated diet of violence in television entertainment may be similar to violence in reality. Many psychologists now claim that persistent childhood exposure to violence is clearly related to aggressive behavior in childhood and later in life (e.g., Eron and Huesmann 1984). In countries where the majority of children drop out of school early, it also may be more reasonable to study younger children than it is in the United States (Morduchowicz et al. 1994). Yet it should not be taken as self-evident that studies of young children are meaningful with respect to future political behavior. Even with justification, a healthy skepticism is appropriate.

In summary, an attempt to resurrect socialization theory and research must accommodate itself to the fact that attitudes and behavior change throughout life and that some, possibly much, of early learning is of limited consequence for adult political behavior. But this is not a call, similar to others we have seen, to resurrect socialization through the study of lifelong learning. In our view, the focus of socialization research should remain on young people. Let us, therefore, confront directly the question of why we should be interested in what mature adolescents or young adults learn about politics.

THE PERIOD OF MAXIMUM CHANGE

The period from about age fourteen through the mid-twenties should receive much more attention from political scientists interested in the process of political socialization. The reason is twofold. First there is little dispute that youth is a time of extraordinary psychological and social change. Second, these are the years during which our society traditionally attempts to educate youth for citizen participation.[10]

To gain knowledge of how people learn about politics and to understand how they change their views in response to their political environment, we would do well to focus on the fourteen to twenty-five age range. Note that we do not suggest an exclusive emphasis on proadults. Just as political learning does not begin at eighteen, it does not end there

either. However they are categorized legally, individuals probably experience more change in their political views between the ages of about fourteen and twenty-five than at any point later in their lives. Yet just how and why youth is a time of great change during these years is still somewhat hazy.

In fact, despite general agreement about the frequency of change, the amount of evidence from political scientists focused directly on this point is limited, and, where evidence exists, it is not without inconsistencies or exceptions. The most extensive evidence is from the Socialization Panel Study conducted between 1965, 1973, and 1982. Jennings and Niemi (1981) found that between the first and second waves, the younger generation (aged seventeen to eighteen in 1965) consistently experienced much greater change than did their parents, both at the aggregate and individual levels. The degree of change for the younger generation then slowed considerably between the second and third waves (Jennings and Markus 1984). On the other hand, Alwin and Krosnick (1991,189), after examining the stability of a large number of items in 1950s and 1970s four-year panels, concluded that there was "little support for a conclusion that a systematic relationship exists between aging and attitude change." Similarly, in a comparative study of the "crystallization" of orientations in the United States, the Netherlands, and West Germany, Jennings (1990) found that change among the youngest cohorts was not consistently greater than among cohorts aged thirty and over, particularly in Germany. Among his conclusions was that "many orientations never do harden" (346).[11] (See also Somit and Peterson 1987.)

Questions about late adolescence and the early adult years are difficult to answer, partly because of the dearth of panel studies. Even the panels that exist (e.g., the 1972-74-76 National Election Study Panel) are typically inadequate because of small numbers of respondents and probable biases due to nonresponse. A sample of 1,000 would generally contain fewer than 175 respondents aged eighteen to twenty-five, which is not many to begin with and becomes unacceptably few for almost any subgroup analysis. Moreover, problems of nonresponse can reach massive proportions among this very age group, making the sample unrepresentative in any event (Converse 1976, 49-50). With a greater emphasis on this age group, however, we might begin to think of ways around these problems. Small sample size could be overcome simply by oversampling young adults and by the inclusion of sixteen and seventeen year olds. The bias due to nonresponse is harder to overcome, but it might to some degree be circumvented by first sampling young people in high school and then following them in later years (along with special samples of high school dropouts).

Efforts along these lines rarely have been attempted, in part, we suspect, because of the view that change occurs throughout adulthood. Yet to ignore the likelihood that change is much faster and more widespread among young-adult rather than among middle-aged and older respondents is perhaps as misleading as it was to assume that no change occurs among adults. Failing to document and to understand the changes that occur earlier in life leaves a large gap in our understanding of adult attitudes. Indeed, part of our long-time failure to recognize the frequency of adult changes in party identification might be attributable to a heavy reliance on complete adult samples. If partisanship is relatively stable, combining younger with older adults hides most of the changes that occur, giving a false sense of continuity. Might it be that other perspectives about adult attitudes and behaviors are incorrect or misleading because of a failure to search for features where they are most likely to be found?[12]

The second reason for political scientists to be interested in the period of adolescence through young adulthood is related to the assumption in our society that these are the years in which youth must be formally educated about government, politics, and citizen participation. As college teachers we often complain about the level of knowledge and skills among students and wish aloud that they would enter our courses better prepared. Generally, we make no distinction about who should have been better trained. We would like prospective political science graduate students to be better prepared because we have to deal with them later on. But we believe that undergraduate students who go on

to become lawyers, policy analysts, diplomats, secondary teachers, and so on, would also be better off if they were more fully prepared to take advantage of college-level work (Hepburn 1987). Yet, in spite of this frequent complaint, few political scientists know much about the high school political science education that precedes college entrance, and few express any degree of interest in it.

Even during the 1970s, in the heyday of socialization work, political scientists paid scant attention to precollegiate studies. Then and now, major research efforts such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the American Freshmen Study, Monitoring the Future, and the National Education Longitudinal Study have had little or no input from political scientists.[13] Admittedly, part of the reason for this absence of participation is one of subject matter. It is easier to obtain support for studies of drug use in high schools, future employment prospects of graduates, and so on, and it is somewhat controversial to study the political views of preadults. Yet even when opportunities present themselves, such as for secondary analysis of large-scale studies, there has been little involvement (although see Conway, Damico, and Damico 1994; Niemi and Junn 1993, 1994).

Advanced placement (AP) courses in high schools (both American government and comparative politics) have become more widespread thanks to the efforts of a few political scientists working with civic educators. But very little material has been developed especially for AP by political scientists, and limited discussion of evaluation has been initiated by political scientists even though the courses largely parallel introductory college-level courses. The opportunity to influence such courses is great, especially with respect to quantitative training, an area in which college students are especially ill-equipped. Yet as the most closely associated academic group, we seem content to leave the job to others.

Certainly, there is room for study of college students, who are technically adults but like high school students are still undergoing intensive learning for future application. Presumably students learn something in our courses, regardless of what they learn in high school (see below). Yet one has to go back to the 1950s and 1960s to find articles about the effects of political science courses on college students in the major journals (e.g., Somit et al. 1958; Robinson et al. 1966). Just how much are college students--especially those who take only one or two courses in political science--learning about politics or about social science approaches to knowledge? Given their often questionable skills on entering college, do they learn relatively little from us, or with a small base of knowledge do they make large relative gains?

The high school years should perhaps hold the greatest interest for us because it is then that society makes the most explicit and concentrated effort to teach political knowledge and civic values. Students are presumed to be at a crucial point in their lives--old enough to understand a good deal about politics but young enough to have had little in the way of relevant public experiences. Moreover, despite high dropout rates, high school courses capture a large fraction of the population, certainly many more than the number taking college courses in U.S. government. However, instead of great interest, there is a lack of interest on the part of most political scientists.

Perhaps the reason for ignoring precollegiate education is the widespread impression that civics courses are of little value. Given the small number of recent studies, and the low level of awareness of them, it is not surprising that many political scientists and educators still rely on Langton and Jennings's 1968 article[14] in which the authors concluded that civics courses had virtually no measurable impact, except on African American students. [15] However, the validity of the 1968 survey has been seriously questioned (Hepburn 1980), and the interpretation of "no effects" has been challenged (Niemi and Junn 1993, 21). Most important, there are a number of much more positive findings in the United States (Ehman 1980; Hepburn 1983; Travers 1983; Hepburn and Napier 1984) and abroad (Torney, Oppenheim, and Farnen 1975; Westholm, Lindquist, and Niemi 1990; Denver and Hands 1990). Recently, Niemi and Junn (1993), working with a nationally

representative sample and a large and varied set of knowledge questions, concluded that "when it comes to high school seniors' knowledge of American government and politics, the school and the civics curriculum do matter" (26).

Another way of thinking about the high schools is to contemplate the implications of the "no effects" finding. If we believe that civics courses teach nothing, do we expect students to learn about government and politics anyway? Where? Certainly some things are learned from television-rights related to criminal proceedings come to mind. But do we really think students learn enough about political processes from television? Some political information is presumably learned in other social studies courses, though it is not likely that other courses are much more or less effective than civics courses. [16] And are we likely to be satisfied with the political acumen of our students if all of their political information comes from history lessons? What about life itself? Is it really true that students mainly learn about politics by participation and observation? This calls into question the value of our own teaching. Will young adults learn analytical and critical thinking with no classroom discussions? Moreover, will young people learn American and democratic values without formal school programs? Or are patriotism, tolerance, efficacy, egalitarianism, and so on, no longer relevant? What about college? Perhaps this is a sufficient learning experience for some, but it is still the case that high school dropout rates are close to 15 percent, that only about half of high school graduates go on to college, and that many of those who go to college do not perceive the value of studying political science.

The changeability of older adolescents and young adults and our more particular interests as political science educators--along with the likelihood that schools have a genuine effect on students--should encourage us to rethink our lack of attention to socialization research and should give us new guidance as to the kinds of research that should be undertaken. We would not arbitrarily limit the age of research subjects. Some variability should be encouraged. But we do feel that research seeking to understand how adults form their political ideas and allegiances will be more productive if concentrated on young people in the period of maximum change and maximum concentrated teaching of political material. Even if the study of younger children is down-played, there remains a considerable amount of work for a revitalized field of political socialization. [17]

CHANGES IN SECONDARY SCHOOL POLITICAL SCIENCE EDUCATION

In the decades since the apex of political socialization research, a number of changes in "political science" education at the secondary school level have occurred. As political scientists are often unaware of these, we describe them briefly.

Curriculum materials for civics and government courses have changed considerably. Civics during and following World War II was mainly the study of the obligations of citizens within the U.S. system of government and the free enterprise system (see, e.g., Dimond and Pflieger 1965). Instruction was usually a description of the three-branch framework of government, the services of government, the procedures of nominating and electing public officials, and, frequently, recitation of the responsibilities of good citizens. The capstone twelfth-grade government course of those years mostly emphasized the structure of the three branches of government and the functions of the various governmental agencies. Although process was addressed in studying "how a bill becomes a law," little attention was paid to ways in which the lives of individuals played out within this formal political framework.

Change in the civics/government curriculum was brought on by political events. Political reactions to the Soviet launching of Sputnik generated large increases in federal funds for educational development, and, by the mid- 1960s, several projects were designed to translate new knowledge of the social sciences into school curriculum materials. The political science development projects worked their influences on the school curriculum through new textbooks and teacher-education short courses. Civics textbooks for eighth and ninth grades, and U.S. government textbooks for eleventh and twelfth grades underwent notable changes as a result of the publication and dissemination of educational

materials that reflected newer research interests in political science (see Hepburn 1987). The content and even the titles of courses changed. The old civics courses began to give way to courses titled after the new programs, such as "American Political Behavior" (Mehlinger and Patrick 1972) and "Comparative Political Systems" (Fenton, Penna, and Schultz 1973). U.S. government courses for eleventh and twelfth grade students, which for decades presented an abundance of detailed, dry, structures-and-functions information, began to exhibit a focus on politics as the workings of "political experiences" in "the political system," and the various processes of governing were examined in lively case studies, data tables from which students would inductively determine patterns or trends, and the tracing of political decisionmaking and action (see, e.g., Fraenkel et al. 1977; Gillespie and Lazarus 1979). In addition, textbook authors increasingly wrote much more about minorities as a result of the civil rights movement (Patrick and Hoge 1991).

The 1980s saw a retreat from the emphasis on political behavior in school textbooks and a shift to more emphasis on political institutions. In this more conservative era, textbooks turned back to more traditional titles and subjects. Nevertheless, case studies, quantitative elements, and many other analytical tools of the political-behavioral period survived. In addition, the school curriculum benefited from the barrage of innovative educational material that resulted from federal funding provided in observance of the bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution. The American Political Science Association (APSA), for example, was among the organizations that launched teacher-education short courses and a lesson-development project focused on enduring principles of the Constitution. The American Bar Association and other law organizations developed extensive materials and annual programs of teacher education. Whereas the APSA programs have had a more sporadic, broad national outreach, the educational projects of the lawyers' organizations have utilized federal, state, and internal funding to build continuity and strive to institutionalize "law-related education" state by state in all fifty states. In some cases, law-related education courses focusing on rights, interpretation of the law, and legal procedures have displaced civics courses or given the study of government and citizen involvement a legalistic context.

Political education in U.S. schools is increasingly linked to television viewing--both formally and informally. Large numbers of schools have added short, formal lessons on current affairs by means of either direct or taped television programs. Public affairs information, which in years past was read by students in print media, is now more likely to be received from a television screen. Channel One, created by Whittle Communications, is a ten-minute news broadcast plus two minutes of advertising that is received in about 40 percent of the nation's secondary schools (Kubey 1993). In return for allowing advertising during class time, the school receives thousands of dollars worth of video hardware free. The Whittle Corporation, in turn, reaps huge profits from advertising to a youthful captive audience. Cable Network News also provides special news broadcasts for students. Teachers can tape The CNN Newsroom off the air at night for use in classes as they see fit. It is provided free-- without hardware but also without advertising.

These specially produced student news programs, popular with both teachers and students, establish a formal linkage to television in the school. But there are also strong informal connections to television viewing. Classroom discussions about government, politics, and political leadership often revolve around the images and information contained in television broadcasts that are observed and absorbed on a daily basis both in and out of school. Hence, television viewing has changed both the context and the content of political science education in secondary schools since much of the political socialization research was done (Hepburn 1990). Obviously the effects of television deserve more attention in future research.

It is evident today that school curricula for civics and government courses are not what they were in the 1950s and 1960s. Reforms of the 1970s were moderated in the more conservative 1980s, but curriculum outlines, and course formats and teaching activities,

have changed considerably. The changes ought to be of interest to political scientists because they reflect, in part, what high school teachers learned in college political science courses. Certainly old notions of civics courses are out of date. Whether the changes make civics and government courses better or more effective than those they replaced should be the subject of more critical inquiry.

POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION OUTSIDE THE UNITED STATES

Today, there is considerable interest in what is more forthrightly called "political education" outside of the United States. Recent activities of the Research Committee on Political Education (RCPE) of the International Political Science Association (IPSA) are a good example. The RCPE has had multiple conferences, mostly in Europe but two in the United States, in 1992 and 1994. Very few of the participants were from the United States. The RCPE also sponsors several panels at IPSA congresses. In 1994, participants and discussants came from Germany, Poland, Hungary, Ukraine, the Netherlands, Hungary, and Croatia as well as the United States. The most recent large-scale empirical studies of socialization have been in Sweden and the Netherlands (Westholm 1991; Wittebrood 1994). And the main book-length studies of socialization have been written or edited outside the United States (e.g., Ichilov 1990; Claussen and Mueller 1990; Dekker and Meyenberg 1991; Csepeli, Keri, and Stumpf 1993; Hudon and Fournier 1994; and Csepeli et al. 1994). Compared to the United States, there is greater interest in exchange of ideas and in cooperative research on political education in Western and Central European countries, where academic interest has not waned.

Why is more attention paid to political socialization abroad? One obvious possibility is that in new and reestablished democracies there is a concern over the political awareness and values of the next generation that does not exist in the United States. In the United States, there seems to be little concern among political scientists about whether the next generation will grow up supportive of democracy. Perhaps it is assumed in the United States that with democracy all around them, students will absorb the necessary knowledge and the appropriate views without explicit teaching or discussion. In newer democracies, "automatic" transmission of democratic values from one generation to the next cannot be taken for granted, and it cannot be readily assumed that educational institutions or families will teach the appropriate knowledge and values. Older generations, from whom transmission might be expected, are themselves often untutored or inexperienced in democratic processes, and they may waver in their own commitment to democratic values (see Morduchowicz et al. 1994). Established programs of political education--whatever their effectiveness-- may reflect earlier antidemocratic approaches and values or may send conflicting messages even about such basic concepts as national identity.[18] Thus, in sharp contrast to the situation in some established democracies, concern among political scientists about political education and research into programs intended to promote the learning of democratic knowledge and attitudes are viewed as significant if not urgent.

Are we prepared to tell researchers and practitioners in new democracies that political socialization is of little consequence or not deserving of study, or that civics courses appear to be failures? Before we do so, we need to remember that in countries with altogether new kinds of governments, political learning is not simply a matter of remembering whether the Supreme Court has seven, eight, or nine members or whether a senator's term is four or six years. It means learning that in a democracy there is regular turnover of leadership, the military is subordinate to civilian rule, freedom of the press is an appropriate value, and so on. Under the circumstances found in newly democratic countries, will current and succeeding generations adopt these values automatically?

Reflecting on this point, one might take the position that socialization research is worthwhile but that it is best done comparatively because there is so little variability in what is taught to young people throughout the United States. One might also argue that any such comparative work should deemphasize established democracies in favor of new democracies or even "predemocratic" societies. But these quite sensible arguments all

assume that instructing young people in some manner is a good thing. Implicitly, they also assume that we know quite a bit about what takes place in established democracies. However, the paucity of both theoretical and empirical efforts in the United States means that we have very little to offer by way of established conclusions or even methods of research. Indeed, the primary sentiment that comes from our lack of attention to adolescents and early adults, from erroneous conclusions about school curricula and from our emphasis on adult change-ability, is that socialization does not matter. That is hardly acceptable to those for whom democracy is a precarious commodity.

THE REVITALIZATION OF POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION THEORY AND RESEARCH

How, then, might we go about reestablishing political socialization as a viable and vibrant field of study? Our arguments above lead to a half-dozen or more specific suggestions.

First, and perhaps most important, we should eliminate what for many purposes is an artificial distinction between those aged under eighteen and those eighteen and over. Obviously, matters that relate to the legal distinction between adults and nonadults have a sharp cutting point: Those under eighteen cannot vote or sign nominating petitions; those eighteen and over can. But often our interest as political scientists does not require such a sharp distinction. Indeed, it may be hampered by it. To the extent that we are interested in understanding development and change in public opinion and behavior, the appropriate bounds may be ages fourteen and twenty-five.

Thirty-five to forty years ago, when the major socialization studies were originally conceived, eighteen years may have been a theoretically useful distinction because it represented the end of formal public schooling and the culmination of most formal training in civics and government. Now, however, an increasingly large proportion of the population goes on to postsecondary education. Though civics courses as such are not part of the college curriculum, students in two- and four-year colleges take courses relevant to an understanding of U.S. politics--including courses in political science, many in history and economics, and some in fields such as sociology and anthropology, women's studies, African American studies, and so on. Nor does the senior year in high school as frequently culminate with a capstone course in government or public issues today.

An appropriate, current perspective might be operationalized in a number of ways. One possibility is to consider the frequent, perhaps even regular inclusion of sixteen and seventeen year olds in National Election Study samples. Another is to consider oversampling young adults so as to increase the number of cases available for analysis. Yet another is to work with sampling and interviewing specialists to try to overcome the bias that exists in the younger portion of adult cross-section samples owing to inability to locate nonrespondents such as school dropouts. Additionally, the sample could include college students, who are typically excluded from adult cross-sections. Finally, researchers should consider subject matter that has a greater focus on young people and the possibility of developing questions that tap these topics.

Second, given the multiple considerations about sample and questionnaire design just noted, as a discipline we might undertake a major new socialization study devoted specifically to the study of intergenerational and youthful change and development. In some respects, such a study could be patterned after the 1965 student-parent study and the panel study it spawned (Jennings and Niemi 1974). That is, it could have specific components designed to study the family, teachers, civics and other social studies classes, and so on. However, in line with the points made above, the sample should not be based on high school seniors alone but be somewhat more inclusive of young people (e.g., those born over a period of five or six years rather than one or two years as in a high school-senior sample). Alternatively, one might modify that study so as to provide more detailed coverage of specific aspects of it. One could well imagine, for example, a study design in which more information was gathered about high school and college courses directly from teachers and textbooks. If broken down into component parts, the magnitude of the task becomes apparent, however, and that might suggest conducting a

variety of small-scale studies rather than attempting a single comprehensive study.

A third suggestion is that political scientists conduct more secondary analyses of major youth studies and be more involved in new studies at the design stage. Designers could consider the approaches elaborated above.

Fourth, we should pay more attention to high school and college courses and their probable effects on young people. There are two distinct perspectives here, and both deserve attention. One is the purely research perspective, and here we refer to both quantitative and qualitative work. We can gather information directly about courses, obtain student and teacher perceptions of instructional material including video material, and search for effects of courses on students. But we might also devote some attention to the evaluation of specific courses and even to the design, evaluation, and implementation of precollegiate courses. Not everyone need be involved in both aspects; a division of labor based on interests and skills makes sense. But collectively we can help both to assess and improve pre-college social studies skills.

Fifth, we badly need more theoretical thinking and writing about all aspects of socialization. Better specification of the long-term effects that should (and should not) be expected of the political education of youth is required. Empirical work is necessary as well, even though that means we will not even begin to find answers to our questions for many years. As stressed earlier, we ought to acknowledge that not everything learned in one's early years is of major significance. Trying to sort out the important from the trivial ought to be a first step in better understanding the connections between early learning and later life.

Theoretical work should not be limited to the question of the effects of childhood learning. Generational change is an area ripe for more theorizing. Beck's (1974) work on the timing of "realignment generations" deserves to be followed up. So, too, does the attempt by Luskin, McIver, and Carmines (1989) to specify differences in the extent to which various issues affect the transmission of partisanship between generations (see Mattel and Niemi 1994). Works such as these are especially important in that they attempt to specify individual-level relationships and the implications of those relationships for the political system as a whole.

Similarly, we might attempt to develop theoretical explanations of when and under what circumstances public and personal events play a role in political development. This might include events, such as one's first direct involvement with the political system, that are significant for only one or two individuals, or events, such as the breakup of the Soviet Union, that are potentially significant for nearly everyone. The mediating effects of news media are also of interest here.

Sixth, more comparative socialization work is needed, especially if it will contribute to our understanding of the significance of learning in early childhood. Given the near-universal recognition of the value of comparative efforts in the study of public opinion and voting, the theoretical value of such work goes without saying. It might be added, however, that with the impetus for socialization studies noted especially in new and reestablished democracies--generally countries in which there has not been a tradition of fine graduate education in the social sciences and of free and open inquiry in political science--a greater than usual need exists for skilled researchers to contribute their skills to the development of useful study designs and of analyses that meet established international standards.

CONCLUSION

Research on political socialization, as constituted in the 1970s, perhaps deserved to die. To assume that what happened early in life was fully determinative of later thinking and behavior was a gross oversimplification. When the field was thus shown to have a foundation of sand, it quickly crumbled. Despite this, the notion that intergenerational influences have something to do with how one thinks politically, an understanding that

generations are subject to common influences that color their perspectives for a long time to come, a sense that early adulthood is a time of especially great change, and gut feelings in policy contexts that even very early learning is important, stubbornly persist. There is every reason to believe that researchers rejected the field as it was then constituted and not the idea of political socialization as a relevant concept.

Resurrecting the field makes sense. If we recognize at the outset the need for more careful theoretical work, if we concede that early learning of political science is of little consequence, if we recognize that schools are worth studying, and if we do away with the artificial barrier between late adolescence and young adulthood, there is every reason to believe that political socialization can again become a vibrant field of study. It will not provide "ultimate" explanations, as some might have thought when we first began to push the study of attitudes and behavior back toward the womb. But it will provide a much-needed emphasis on some of the most exciting questions we confront in studying political behavior.

NOTES

1. *At times in this essay, we appear to be highly critical of certain early work in political socialization. If we tread on any toes, it should be remembered, first, that such criticisms are much easier with hindsight and probably could not have been made in advance of that work, and, second, that we ourselves were in a position to have done something about it if we had had great insight at the time.*

2. *For example, Piaget and Weil (1951) found that youngsters aged six to eight do not easily understand "reciprocity." That is, they do not understand that they would be the foreigner if put in some country other than their own.*

3. *Green and Palmquist (1990) argue that much of the observed instability is measurement error and that there are minimal effects of other factors after correcting for limited reliability. However, by far the majority opinion seems to be that partisanship responds in quite regular fashion to outside influences.*

4. *"Who can read the daily news from Lebanon or Afghanistan or South Africa [or Northern Ireland or Bosnia or Rwanda] without feeling that nationalism, religious fundamentalism, and ethnic identity represent enduring and powerful affective commitments, which surely are not invented in sober and rationally economic decisions by middle-aged women and men?" (Sears 1990, 76).*

5. *Witness the difficulties faced by Newcomb et al. (1967, 22-24) in designing items in the late 1950s that would be comparable in some way to items asked of Bennington College students in the 1930s.*

6. *This is not in any way to criticize the skills of Searing, Schwartz, and Lind. It was after they wrote that concern about the depressing effects of measurement errors began to surface (e.g., Achen 1975) and that problems with the wording of issue questions used in the 1950s and 1960s came to light (Sullivan, Pierson, and Marcus, 1978). It was also later that we became aware of the inadequacy--even now--of many of the scales used to tap the "orientations" they considered (see, e.g., Craig, Niemi, and Silver 1990; Niemi, Craig, and Mattel 1991 on trust and efficacy).*

7. *These results suggest another critique of Searing, Schwartz, and Lind's analysis. That is, there has been too little theorizing about where and when the effects of socialization should be observed, making Seating, Schwartz, and Lind's indiscriminate approach (relate every orientation to every issue) seem apropos. In fact, it may be that a given orientation is related to a limited number of issue beliefs that somehow engage that value. For example, patriotism well may be related to certain foreign policy attitudes but to few or no domestic policies.*

8. Foldman (1988) showed that two other "core beliefs"--equality of opportunity and economic individualism--are related to a wide variety of policy preferences, evaluations of presidential performance, and candidate evaluations. In Britain, Heath, Evans, and Martin (1993) showed that certain core beliefs are related to political protest attitudes and behavior.

9. We are also less likely now than twenty years ago to expect one or two variables (even partisanship) to fully account for a dependent variable and are consequently more likely to admit that a number of variables have small but still statistically significant and meaningful impacts. Here, none of the authors cited suggests that patriotism or any such values completely determine later attitudes or behavior.

10. Adelson and O'Neil, quoted below, actually refer to reasoning abilities that "begin to make their appearance" in fifteen year olds. If they are right, and if those abilities are important for understanding concepts of politics and government (as opposed to memorizing facts and figures), the historic tradition of teaching civics to thirteen and fourteen year olds (eighth and ninth graders) might have to be rethought.

11. Another perspective, of course, comes from studies emphasizing generational change (e.g., Abramson 1983; Converse 1976; Inglehart 1977). Again, there seems to be agreement that late adolescence and early adulthood is the period in which generations are formed. Yet many questions remain, especially about the circumstances under which identifiable generations are created. Witness, for example, the controversy about the periodicity of realignments (Shafer 1991).

12. An effort to focus socialization work on the period of maximum change might finally wean aficionados and critics alike from the view that socialization research necessarily promotes the status quo or that it should be defined as studying factors that promote political stability.

13. On NAEP, see the references in Niemi and Junn (1993). On the American Freshmen Study, see Dey, Astin, and Korn (1991). *Monitoring the Future* and the *National Education Longitudinal Study* are available through the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research.

14. For example, Erikson, Luttbeg, and Tedin, in the 1991 edition of their public opinion text (148-49), cite the Langton and Jennings article prominently.

15. See also Merelman (1971) and Ehman (1980, 101-03).

16. Ravitch and Finn (1987, 174-79) indicate that the amount and kinds of history courses taken by high school students are related to history knowledge, though they are also rather disparaging about students' knowledge of history.

17. Given our emphasis on both proadults and young adults, the boundaries between political socialization, public opinion, and voting behavior are likely to be ill-defined and permeable. That seems to be true of many fields. We do not see it as a problem.

18. Kill (1991, 183-84), for example, notes that education in Turkey sometimes stresses identification with the nation and sometimes with Islam.

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