

PHILO C. WASBURN AND  
TAWNIA J. ADKINS COVERT

# MAKING CITIZENS

Political Socialization Research and Beyond



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*In Mara's memory, and for Aaron, Leah, Hope, and Mary Lou.*

*PCW*

*For Jason, Thalia, Corda and Kai.*

*TJAC.*

# PREFACE

## SOME “WHY” QUESTIONS ABOUT CITIZENS

Why do citizens often have very different perceptions of particular political actors, conditions, and events? Why do they adopt different political identities? Why do they have disparate views of the structure of power and authority in the United States today? Why do they sometimes have incompatible understandings of “freedom,” “equality,” and “democracy” and the importance of these supposedly fundamental American values? Why do they have varying opinions about their political obligations as citizens and about their own ability to influence government? Why do they have highly diverse attitudes toward particular government domestic and international policies, civil rights, and the role of religion in American political life? Why are some individuals avid consumers of political news, while others are content to remain largely oblivious to the political world around them? Why do some citizens initiate no political activity while others vote regularly, contact officials, participate in the affairs of their community, campaign, and even engage in protests?

There are a number of ways of answering these and countless other related questions.<sup>1</sup> The first variety of explanation occurs in the context of conversations. For example, a person is asked “Why did you vote for x rather than y”? Her answer is that “I liked x because he is pro- life.” This account justified her choice to herself as well as to the person with whom she was speaking. It was a claim to the appropriateness of her selection rather than the presentation of a causal analysis.

A second variety of explanation appears in media accounts of public events. For example, a lead story explains why *x* won an election held on the preceding day. The answer refers to the candidate's positions on selected issues such as taxes, immigration, the role of the U.S. military, and to the relative size of their campaign fund. The story provided a simplified cause-effect account. It relied on widely available knowledge rather than technical expertise and helped make the election outcome intelligible to a mass audience.

A third type of answer to a "why" question involves reference to a rule or set of rules to which the individual is committed. For example, they could feel obligated to back candidates and parties whose policies are believed to benefit a group with which he/she identifies. Accordingly, a farmer explains that he routinely votes for Republican candidates because he "knows" farm prices are better with Republicans in office, or a construction worker responds that he invariably votes for Democrats because he "knows" the party supports organized labor. Over time such rules tend to become stable and socially shared. Like some other types of explanations, the statement of a rule that was followed to explain one's behavior can be assessed in terms of its appropriateness rather than its causal accuracy.

Technical accounts constitute a fourth variety of explanation. "By definition, they combine cause-effect explanation (rather than the logics of appropriateness) with grounding in some systematic specialized discipline (rather than everyday knowledge)."<sup>2</sup> This book presents technical accounts of the kinds of questions illustrated above. They draw on the empirical studies conducted by political scientists, sociologists, psychologists, and communication researchers concerned with political socialization, the life-long processes by which people acquire, maintain, and change their political beliefs, values, attitudes, perspectives, self-identities, and patterns of participation.

Research on political socialization has been conducted since the 1950s. However, all these decades later, empirical findings remain largely uncoded, the various alternative theoretical approaches that have guided the investigations of the topic still appear to be contradictory, and the direction of future studies is uncertain. This book does not add yet additional data on the political socialization process. Rather, it proposes one systematic way of conceptualizing the enormous amount and variety of empirical findings that political socialization research has produced over the past six decades. It elaborates a life course perspective that integrates much exist-

ing research by treating the alternative theoretical orientations that have guided studies over the history of the field as supplementary rather than as competing approaches, each providing some insights into the complex ways in which people are made into citizens.

The book's first section outlines a life course model of the political socialization process.

Chapter 1 describes the field's paradigm shifts. These have both contributed to and thwarted the development of an overall understanding of political socialization throughout the lives of individuals. Some of the basic theoretical and empirical insights provided by each of the perspectives are identified. These will be incorporated into the life course model of political socialization explicated in section one. The second chapter identifies two variables that influence all of the processes of political socialization referenced in the model: the historical context in which they occur and individuals' levels of cognitive development and political sophistication. Inclusion of these influences within the proposed model is consistent with each of the apparently incompatible research paradigms. Chapter 3 discusses the agents of political socialization that play roles of varying importance throughout people's lifetimes: family, school, church, work, voluntary associations, and media. Analysis is complicated by the fact that each of these has a somewhat different meaning in different periods of time.

The process of making citizens occurs within the context of opportunities and constraints associated with social identities. The second section of this book reviews research on the ways in which gender, race/ethnicity, and social class together affect the political socialization people receive in their families, schools, churches, voluntary associations, and the particular media to which they pay attention and their understanding of the material presented by those media.

The final section illustrates the process of political socialization and considers why and how it might be modified. Chapter 7 introduces two imaginary characters. Details of their lives are fictional (although many of the places and events mentioned in their stories are real). Their histories are intended to illustrate how the model plays out in people's lives, that is, how citizens are made.<sup>3</sup> Chapter 8 engages two related, basic "what" questions about making future citizens. First, what could each of the agents of political socialization do to propagate a less superficial and more personally meaningful understanding of political democracy? Second, what could they do to increase popular involvement in such a political



system? It expresses concern about the vitality of a democracy in which so many citizens have little political interest and knowledge, in which rates of political participation are low, but in which expression of dissatisfaction with government is widespread.

## NOTES

1. The following discussion of varieties of explanations is based on Tilly, Charles. *Why? What Happens When People Give Reasons...and Why*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006; and Converse, Phillip E. "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics." In *Ideology and Discontent*, edited by David Apter, 206-261. Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1964.
2. Tilly, 2006: 130.
3. Ideas for the contents of Chap. 7 originated in papers written in a yearlong seminar on political socialization held in the Department of Sociology at Purdue University. The authors thank the student participants for their enthusiasm, diligent research, original insights, critical responses, and often their sense of humor. The contributors were Brandi Biser, Alexandra Bradley, Mallory Deardorff, Claire Fletcher, Jillian Kolb, Hayden McMurti, Meghan Moore, Andrew Portlock, Maria Rooijackers, and Kaleigh Simpson. Claire Fletcher was responsible for organizing and supplementing their contributions.

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PART I

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A Model of the Political Socialization  
Process

## Changing Perspectives on Political Socialization

The term “political socialization” first appeared in print in the first edition of *The Handbook of Social Psychology* published in 1954. While the chapter in which it was used focused on voting, discussion clearly suggested that the study of the developmental processes by which individuals acquire political identities, beliefs, values, attitudes, and patterns of behavior could be applied to many other features of political life. Five years later, the first book to bear the title “political socialization” was introduced (Hyman 1959). Here the scope of inquiry was more broadly conceptualized in terms of three dimensions: participation or involvement in politics, favoring radical or conservative goals, and supporting democratic or authoritarian forms of government. By 1968, ten major problem areas were distinguished and discussed: the system relevance of political socialization, its contents, life cycle patterns, generational differences, cross-cultural comparisons, subgroup and cultural comparisons, the learning process, the agencies of political socialization, and the extent of its impact on individuals and specialized (especially elite) political socialization (Dennis 1968).

The late 1960s and early 1970s saw a vast increase in the number of books and research articles devoted to political socialization.<sup>1</sup> Political socialization came to be recognized as a field within political science, and was considered as a “growth stock” in social science research (Greenstein 1970). The following years of research witnessed irregular periods of stagnation and progress. New periods were initiated by paradigm shifts as described by Thomas Kuhn. While Kuhn’s depiction of the history of change within

sciences might not apply to all fields, initially it did seem to describe the development of theory and research in political socialization (Kuhn 1962).

According to Kuhn, while, at times, any science can develop in a cumulative manner, major advances occur during “revolutions” in which a once dominant paradigm is replaced by a competitor. “A paradigm is a fundamental image of the subject matter. It serves to define what should be studied, what questions should be asked, how they should be asked, and what rules should be followed in interpreting the answers obtained...” (Ritzer 1975). The revolution is prompted by empirical findings, resulting from research conducted within the framework of the older paradigm, which the paradigm itself is unable to explain. The ascendant paradigm has the power to explain the anomalies. In addition, the paradigm either offers a new explanation of earlier empirical findings, or ignores them as irrelevant to the central concerns of the science.

David Sears identified four distinct perspectives on the development and maintenance of political beliefs, attitudes, self-identities, and patterns of behavior that can be found in the vast literature on political socialization (Sears 1990). At one extreme, the *persistence perspective* asserts that residues of pre-adult political learning are relatively immune to changes in later years. At the other extreme, the *lifetime openness perspective* maintains that political dispositions have an approximately uniform potential for change at all ages. The *life cycle perspective* and the *impressionable years perspective* fall between these two positions. The former maintains that people are susceptible to adopting particular dispositions at certain life stages, such as radicalism in youth and conservatism in later years. The latter position asserts that political beliefs and attitudes are unusually vulnerable in late adolescence and early adulthood. In other stages of life, people are resistant to the likelihood of change. The following four sections of this chapter briefly review the rise, fall, and contributions of each of the perspectives in the history of inquiry into political learning.

### THE PERSISTENCE PERSPECTIVE

Initial studies of political socialization concluded that many, if not most, important political orientations are established by early adolescence.<sup>2</sup> These included compliance to socially legitimated rules and authority, political interest, sense of political efficacy, fundamental loyalties to nation, and political rules of the game in democratic systems. These central components of the political self, developed primarily in the family, the school,

and in peer associations, were viewed as quite stable, and serving as a perceptual screen to evaluate later political stimuli. The paradigm was influenced by learning and psychoanalytic models that were incorporated into theories of political behavior in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The models located the roots of political behavior in early experience (Sears 1990).

The *persistence perspective* incorporated a set of three assumptions about political orientations termed by Searing, Wright, and Rabinowitz as the *primacy principle*. Subsequently, the principle has often been referred to as the *primary principle*. “The first is that they are learned during childhood. The second is that this childhood learning further shapes subsequent modification of them. The third is that the scale of any subsequent modification is small: fundamental political orientations tend to endure through life” (Searing et al. 1976). The principle does not assert that significant political learning does not occur in later periods of people’s lives. Nor does it maintain that all political orientations are transmitted unchanged from one generation to another.

The *primary principle* focused the attention of early political socialization research on the development, during childhood, of those political orientations that contributed to the stability and persistence of political systems—particularly to political democracy as institutionalized in the United States at that time. Deep-rooted attachment to the political system established in childhood was viewed as serving as a source of diffuse support upon which the political system could draw during times of crisis such as war and economic depression. Trust, confidence, and affection are always needed by a polity to help assure that citizens will comply with authoritative directives, tolerate significant personal costs such as paying taxes and serving in the military, and exercise some self-restraint in making demands on the political system (Easton and Dennis 1969). Early political socialization was seen as playing the role of inculcating values espoused by the American political system.

Some of those working within the *persistence perspective* tended to ignore previous studies which found that important individual dispositions do change over time.<sup>3</sup> For example, James Davies maintained that political socialization “begins at about the age of three and is basically completed by the age of thirteen” (Davies 1965). However, many others recognized that “political socialization continues through the life cycle; that not all childhood learning influences adult behavior, and that in dynamic modern societies, political attitudes are rarely transmitted unchanged from one

generation to another. The childhood focus stems instead from an interest in explaining how political attitudes *develop*.”<sup>4</sup> Such researchers did not subscribe to the belief that the more an important orientation is in adult behavior, the earlier it is learned in childhood. Rather than adopting this understanding of the *primary principle*, they investigated an alternative *structuring principle* according to which basic orientations acquired during childhood can influence the later learning and adoption of specific beliefs, attitudes, and patterns of behavior.

Nevertheless, the challenge remained of empirically establishing the links between early orientations and their adult outcomes (Searing et al. 1973).

Even while research was going forward guided by the *persistence perspective*, evidence was accumulating to suggest strongly that some important political dispositions acquired during childhood, such as partisan tendencies and political trust, do not endure throughout life and do not structure the later adoption of specific beliefs and attitudes (Marsh 1971). Theoretical arguments that, in general, people maintain considerable flexibility in their attitudes far beyond their early socialization experiences also were being advanced (Brim and Kagan 1980; Glegen 1980; Lerner 1984).

Another factor also furthered the displacement of the *persistence paradigm*. Focus on the contributions of childhood political socialization to political order and stability left unaddressed questions about the origin of orientations promoting political conflict and change. These very topics came to the fore in the early 1970s. Violence in black ghettos, mass rallies demanding greater social, economic, and political equality for various minorities, demonstration in opposition to the Vietnam War, protest, and sometimes violent confrontations on American campuses centering around US involvement in Vietnam and also the rights of students at their colleges and universities—all of these events consumed the attention of many sociologists and political scientists. Existing political socialization research had identified some sources of political stability, not dramatic political change. The pressing need to understand the political context within which they were working, coupled with increasing realization that some political orientations acquired during childhood did not endure, led many of those conducting research on political socialization to abandon the *persistence perspective* to ignore the findings produced under its guidance and to adopt a new paradigm for the conduct of their inquiries.<sup>5</sup>



### THE LIFETIME OPENNESS PERSPECTIVE

The *persistence perspective* was largely replaced by its antithesis. Rather than focusing on the lifetime stability of certain political orientations acquired during childhood, the *lifetime openness* approach emphasized that age is irrelevant to the establishment, maintenance, or change of political orientations. Those that appeared to endure simply were seen as the result of a lack of challenge to them over time. There was some empirical evidence to support this view. For example, one study reported that most individuals live in environments whose partisanship was congruent with their early adulthood environments (Brown 1981). Another found that most people live throughout their lives in environments with tolerance norms that are consistent with their early ones (Miller and Sears 1986).

The *openness perspective* advanced the thesis that people's political orientations reflect the socialization they are experiencing in the roles they presently occupy within the spheres of work, family, and voluntary associations. Research on topics such as the impact on political orientations of particular occupations,<sup>6</sup> job satisfaction (Delli Carpini et al. 1983), workplace politicization (Peterson 1992), unemployment (Bank and Ullah 1987), being a working mother (Reece et al. 1983), and religious participation (Beatty and Walter 1984; Houghland and Christenson 1983) exemplified this position.

### THE IMPRESSIONABLE YEARS PERSPECTIVE

Research exploring the impact on individuals' political orientations of the sociohistorical context of their present lives might have proceeded to advance the lifetime openness perspective. Instead, it produced a partial paradigm revolution of its own. Rather than emphasizing influence exerted by events such as wars, depressions, government legitimacy crises and the like on all members of society (termed *historical* or *period* effects), numerous researchers began exploring the influence of shared historical experiences on a birth group in a similar stage of the life cycle development (termed *cohort* or *generational* effects). Studies of socializing experiences of the dramatic political events of the 1960s and early 1970s largely were analyses of generational politics.<sup>7</sup> Underlying much of this research were the assumptions that late adolescence and early adulthood was a particularly critical period in the life cycle for developing lasting

political orientations and that lasting period effects tended to be especially pronounced for members of this age cohort.

Studies guided by the *impressionable years* hypothesis tended to ignore findings produced within the framework of the *persistence* paradigm and appeared to contradict the basic premise of the *lifetime openness* perspective. The paradigm was responsive to the dramatic political changes occurring in the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s in which the young played decisive roles. However, America also was undergoing another far less dramatic, though nonetheless significant, change. This change was the aging of the American population.

The proportion of older citizens in the United States has been increasing since the turn of the century. In 1900, those 65 and older made up 4.1 percent of the population. By 1960, that proportion had risen to 9.2 percent, by 1980 11.3 percent and, by 2014, 14.5 percent. Those over 65 have become the fastest-growing segment of the population as the huge “baby boom” generation became “senior citizens.” Ironically, it was the development of the political orientations of this particular birth cohort, whose members experienced late adolescence and early adulthood during the turmoil of the 1960s, that was the primary concern of those who helped to create the *impressionable years* paradigm. Now, to some, that paradigm seemed inadequate to account for the development of discontinuous political orientation of members of the cohort later in their life cycle.

In support of the *impressionable years* paradigm, there were empirical studies to suggest that members of the 1960s generation demonstrated considerable stability in many of their political attitudes, and had not become more conservative with maturity.<sup>8</sup> However, such studies typically were based on data derived from individuals who had been deeply involved in the political movements of the 1960s. Findings concerning those who, as youth in the 1960s, had invested considerable time, energy, and other personal resources in organizing marches, voter registration drives, fund-raising and the like, might not generalize to others of their political generation.

### THE LIFE CYCLE PERSPECTIVE

Studies began to appear during the mid-1970s suggesting that Americans, who were living longer and retiring earlier, were developing distinctive, politically relevant concerns. For example, data indicated that older generations wanted to continue their sense of social order and instill their values in their “social heirs” (Bengston and Kuypers 1971). Other research suggested

that the “young old” (those aged 55–75) who were retired and healthy, had a primary concern with income security, while the “old old” (those 75 and older) who were less healthy, mobile, and independent had a preeminent policy concern with health and the American health care delivery system (Neugarten 1974). Such concerns appeared to result in increased political participation. Older Americans were involving themselves in organizations that increased their political interest and were participating in the electoral process (Cutler 1981; Trela 1972; Verba and Nie 1972). This proved to be particularly important in the 2012 presidential election.

Voters 65 and over largely abandoned their support for Republican candidate Mitt Romney for opposing President Barak Obama’s Affordable Care Act. The legislation provided for free preventative checkups, more complete subsidies for prescription drug coverage, and prevented private insurers from denying service to people with serious “preexisting health conditions” (Jacobs and Skocpol 2012).

Findings such as these did not appear to be compatible with the *persistence* or *lifetime openness* paradigms. They also seemed to be incompatible with the *impressible years* paradigm to the extent that older Americans were found to maintain a distinctive set of political orientations that were not, in fact, those of their youth which had acquired a new ideological meaning in a changed social-historical context.<sup>9</sup> The findings suggested that particular political dispositions are likely to develop at certain stages of the life cycle. As Steckenrider and Cutler put it: “Perhaps the most promising and still uncharted paths to the mysteries connecting aging and political disposition lie in the sequence of roles associated with adult maturation and aging, e.g., student, spouse, wage-earner, parent, retiree and – increasingly in today’s age-conscious society – ‘old person’. With this it should again be noted that the political socialization consequences of particular role transitions are influenced by the social-historical contexts in which they occur.” “As humans age and develop, so do their needs. These needs in turn restructure what individuals expect and demand of society and the political system, but their expectations in turn reflect the social structure in which they live” (Sigel and Hoskin 1977).

### PRESENT LACK OF A DOMINANT PARADIGM

None of the perspectives, developed between the 1960s and the 1990s, was completely abandoned. By 2000, many of “the concepts and findings from earlier research had thoroughly permeated the discipline of political science and had become embedded in a number of subfields, including public opinion, electoral behavior, political culture and political move-

ments” (Jennings 2007). Considerable research, guided by each of the paradigms, continues to this day.

At present, there is no dominant perspective guiding and integrating political socialization theory and research. There are at least two alternative explanations for the failure of any of the paradigms to prevail. First, it might be argued that the situation is due largely to the enormous amount of time, great expense, and numerous technical difficulties that would be involved in conducting longitudinal research that could convincingly establish the validity of one of the paradigms, while disposing of its alternatives. In the absence of such research, one perspective after another has been called into question, though never thoroughly discredited, when research, prompted by changing intellectual, social, or cultural conditions, produced empirical findings incompatible with its defining characteristics. A successor paradigm, which had the power to explain the anomalous findings, rose to ascendancy. The paradigm presented new questions for research, typically treating previous conceptual and empirical research findings as irrelevant to the central concerns of the field. In time, the new paradigm itself suffered a similar fate.

Alternatively, it might be argued that once dominant paradigms of the political socialization process were rejected largely because they were commonly misunderstood and misrepresented. For example, the *primary principle* was incorrectly characterized as denying that political learning is a dynamic process in which both constancy and change occur (Somit and Peterson 1987). Subsequently, valid basic findings that resulted from its guidance were often ignored or neglected only later to be rediscovered and further explored.

The model of political socialization developed in this and in the following chapters draws on selected theoretical assumptions, concepts, and hypotheses associated with each of the four paradigms. Some fundamental components of the various perspectives will be treated as supplementary rather than as contradictory principles. The model itself is a broad framework which offers a view of the political socialization process over an individual’s entire lifetime.

Several long-established empirical propositions, produced over the many decades of research on political socialization, will be cited in support of incorporating a principle into the model. In addition to those derived from the history of theory and empirical research focused on political socialization, the model will draw on generally accepted findings concerning individual development, historical, and social context influences provided by various social sciences. The model is intended to draw attention to the remarkable complexity of political socialization.

Acknowledging the complexity involves explicit recognition that socialization is carried out within changing *historical* and *social contexts*. *Historical contexts* refer to macro political and economic conditions and events that characterize a period. These include war/peace, economic depression/prosperity, and domestic turmoil/quiescence. *Social contexts* refer to the structure and operation of socializing agents that predominate during a period. These include family, church, workplace, voluntary associations, and media. Some features of these social institutions evolve over time while people's lives remain organized around them.

Existing research studies provide insights into political socialization within particular historical and social contexts. They provide valuable “snapshots” of the political socialization process. This book acknowledges their limitations, but, much more important, their contributions to the overall understanding of how citizens are made. That is, each study contributes a frame of a motion picture that would depict the dynamic political socialization process. Chapter 7 presents “film” of two very different fictional citizens whose stories are intended to illustrate our life course model of political socialization.

## COMPONENTS OF THE LIFE COURSE MODEL

### A. Principles Derived from the Four Paradigms

1. *Primary*: Some political orientations, acquired during pre-adolescence, particularly in the family and in the school, tend to endure. Families with which children strongly identify (Davies 1965; McClosky and Dahlgren 1959), in which parents agree on political matters (Niemi 1973), in which children participate in decision making (Lane 1972), and in which parental interest in politics is high (Marvick and Nixon 1961; Verba and Burns 2005) are most likely to instill lasting partisanship, sense of political efficacy, and loyalty to nation. The school channels this loyalty and partisanship by encouraging students to perform their duties as individuals, primarily by passive compliance and by voting (Campbell 2006; Dawson and Prewitt 1969; Easton and Dennis 1969; Hess and Torney 1967). However, not all subgroups in a complex society transmit persisting orientations supportive of the ongoing political system (Abramson 1972; Gimpel et al. 2003; Sigel and Hoskin 1981).
2. *Impressionable Years*: People are highly vulnerable to shifts in attitudes during young adulthood as they develop political

awareness and a greater ability to comprehend and evaluate political issues (Schuman and Rogers 2004). After that period, the stability of certain political orientations such as party identification (Alwin and Krosnick 1991), and other symbolic attitudes, such as liberalism-conservatism tend to increase with age (Jennings 2002; Sears 1981; Sears 1983). However, there may be a decline in attitude intensity toward the end of the life course (Alwin and Krosnick 1991).

3. *Structuring*: Regardless of when in the life cycle they are established, certain political orientations such as racial attitudes, party identification, and political ideology, tend to remain relatively stable over the remainder of the individual's lifetime and continue to exert an influence on their political choices (Converse and Markus 1979; Levitin and Miller 1979).
4. *Lifetime Openness*: While attending to the prominence of adolescence and young adulthood in the establishment of some political orientations is probably warranted, more attention needs to be paid to development that occurs before and after these stages in the life cycle (Delli Carpini 1989). Some changes in political disposition seem likely to occur as individuals go through the sequence of roles associated with adult maturation and aging (Steckenrider and Cutler 1989; Stoker and Jennings 1995), and when they experience upward or downward social mobility (Abramson 1983). In addition, social and political change can render political orientations acquired earlier less relevant and incomplete for later circumstances (Brim 1968).
5. *Life Cycle*: Some particular dispositions develop at certain ages. For example, older citizens express greater concern with public policies bearing on retirement, leisure, public benefits, and health concerns (Cutler 1981; Cutler and Schmidhauser 1975; Schreiber and Marsden 1972). They also tend to have a "developmental stake" in wanting to continue their sense of social order and to instill its value on their "social heirs" (Bengston and Kuypers 1971).

### B. *Principles of Individual Development*

1. *Dividing the Life Cycle*: It is useful, in numerous types of social research, to divide the life course into several funda-

mental stages. The particular stages specified are determined by the topic of inquiry and by the theoretical interests of the investigator. The significance of stages is that, as people grow older, “they develop biologically, psychologically, and socially...they are continually being reallocated to new sets of roles and re-socialized to perform them. This movement with aging occurs partly by individual choice, but it is also channeled by rules, linkages and mechanisms governing role sequences within social structure” (Riley 1987). The life cycle approach to politics assumes that each stage of the life cycle is associated with a particular set of physiological changes, socio-emotional concerns, roles, needs, and pursuits which affect the individual’s way of perceiving and responding to the political world (Braungart 1984). However, life course events may be experienced differently by men and women, by different ethnic groups, and by various social classes. Additionally, it has been suggested that “time of life events is becoming less regular; age is losing its customary social meanings, and the trends are toward the fluid life cycle and an age irrelevant society” (Neugarten 1979).

2. *Multiple Agents*: At all points in the life course, the individual is subject to the influence of multiple agents of political socialization. Their influence on one another can be reinforcing or countervailing. For example, “In diversified political cultures, like those of France or Italy, the differences in political orientations taught by a conservative Catholic family, the governmental school system, a socialist labor union and proletarian parties are great” (Dawson and Prewitt 1969).
3. *Cross-Pressuring*: When individuals are exposed to socializing processes that operate in opposing directions, they tend to accept the political norms of the preferred socializing agent. Under such circumstances, political participation is likely to be carried out with little enthusiasm. In circumstances where preference cannot operate, due to the distribution of utilitarian, coercive, or symbolic resources among the contending socializing agents, individuals are likely to respond by losing interest in and withdrawing from political affairs (Lipset 1963; Segal 1969). People whose communication networks involve greater political disagreement are less likely to participate in politics (Huckfeldt and Morehouse Mendez 2004; Muntz 2002). More specifically, network disagreement demobilizes people

who are the political minority in their neighborhood but has little influence on people in the majority (McClurg 2006).

4. *Cohort Differences in Aging*: Because each individual and his/her cohort is born within a particular set of years, he/she lives through a unique segment of historical time and confronts his/her own particular sequence of environmental events and changes. Because society changes, people in different cohorts age in different ways. The aging process is altered by social change (Riley 1987).
5. *Asynchrony*: While individuals within a particular cohort are aging, the society is changing around them. The two dynamics, aging and social change, are not synchronized with each other. Each dynamism has its own tempo (Riley 1987).
6. *Idiosyncratic Development*: Unique personality development results from the interaction of the self, the socializing experiences of family, church, school, workplace, the mass media, and other socializing agents, and the singular experiences derived from one's daily routine (Delli Carpini 1989).

### C. Principles of Historical Context Influences

1. *Period Effects*: Some historical events have similar lasting effects on large segments of the population. For example, the introduction and widespread adoption of television (Meyrowitz 1985), and later the internet (Davis and Owen 1998; Gainous and Wagner 2011), demystified political roles and their occupants for the mass public, and contributed to the decline of political parties (Bimber 2007; Croteau and Hoynes 2003; Joslyn 1984). The September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States affected a wide range of political attitudes (Essex et al. 2002; Perrin 2005; Schubert et al. 2002).
2. *Diverse Reactions to Political Events*: Individuals' reactions to political events vary with their positions in the structure of age, gender, race/ethnic, and class relations. Different age groups perceive and react to the same experiences in different ways because of the particular stages of personal and social development they have reached when the event occurs (Delli Carpini 1989; Erickson and Stoker 2011). Observed differ-



ences between the reactions of men and women to policy proposals dealing with matters such as poverty and military spending, are expressions of their different locations in the social organization of production and reproduction, and their participation in different group-based communication networks (Sprague 1991). The individual's class position defined in terms of his/her work role in the occupational structure has the greatest impact or potential impact, on his/her reactions to the political world (Sigel and Hoskin 1977). Prior to taking on roles in the occupational structure, individuals from different racial, ethnic, and class backgrounds are likely to have undergone some differences in socialization experiences, developing different value orientations (e.g. the importance of discipline, conformity, creativity, and independence) which subsequently influence their reactions to political affairs (Kohn 1969).

3. *Cohort Effects*: Some historical events have similar lasting effects on individuals from within a continuous set of years. For example, the cohort that entered the electorate during the Great Depression-New Deal years continued to have a strong Democratic Party identification as they aged over the life cycle (Abramson 1983). Similarly, the cohort that was reaching young adulthood during the era of Vietnam and Watergate subsequently were more liberal on social issues, more likely to have an alternative political agenda, less supportive of the political system, less likely to be involved in mainstream politics, more Democratic in vote, but less Democratic in long-term party allegiance (Delli Carpini 1986). In both examples, some intra-cohort differences existed as a result of gender, racial, ethnic, and class factors specified in the *Principle Diverse Reactions to Political Events*, and as a result of individual development factors identified in the *Principle of Idiosyncratic Development*.

#### D. *Basic Assumptions of the Model*

1. Periods of the life cycle are intended to reflect the ages at which individuals tend to leave school, enter the world of work, found a family, retire, and maintain good health. The

ages generally associated with these transitions change over time. Furthermore, the structural locations of a given individual influence the particular chronological ages at which the important role transitions, marking different periods in the life cycle, will occur. Individuals also can differ in their levels of psycho-social maturation at a given chronological age.

2. The agents of political socialization which are specified in the model are interaction systems in which the individual actively participates (mass media are the exception). However, as was pointed out by Robert Merton in his sociological classic, any group (existing, remembered, or even just imagined) can exercise a socializing influence in a passive way merely by being thought of by an individual (Merton 1968). Peers are not identified as independent socializing agents. They are assumed to be located and to operate within the context of other active socializing agents.
3. At all stages of the life course, there are complex relations among the agents of political socialization. Politically relevant messages transmitted by one agent can be reinforced, supplemented, reinterpreted, or contradicted by another agent or agents. The ways in which individuals respond to discrepant messages have been explained by several theories including cross-pressuring, noted earlier, and cognitive dissonance (Donsbach 1991; Festinger 1957; Harmon-Jones and Mills 1999; Mullainathan and Washington 2009).
4. The relative overall importance of each agent of political socialization can vary from one period of the life cycle to another. For example, the overall importance of one's family of orientation is more likely to be greater during one's adolescence than during his/her adulthood. Furthermore, for any given individual, a particular agent of political socialization can have greater overall influence throughout his/her lifetime than that agent does for some other given individual. For example, the church can have considerable lasting influence on the political orientations of one person and virtually no influence on another.

Why do citizens have their particular views on various aspects of political life and about their own role in it? Based on the existing research, the technical answer to this "why" question is suggested by the life course model being developed in Section I. In broad outline, that

answer can be summarized: At a given point in historical time, the political orientations of a given adult, occupying a distinct set of locations in the structures of class, age, gender, and race/ethnic relations, and having reached a certain level of psycho-social maturation, are not only a reflection of present exposure to and processing of politically relevant messages coming from family, church, school, work organizations, voluntary associations, and media as well as by ongoing personal events. In part, they are also a reflection of some enduring orientations acquired in childhood as specified by the *primary principle*, and by some acquired in adolescence and young adulthood as specified by the impressionable years and structuring principles. Figure 1.1 below represents the view of political socialization developed in this and in the following chapters. Alternate perspectives are certainly possible. Chapter 2 provides further analysis of factors that shape the content of the political messages citizens process.

**A Life-course Model of Political Socialization**

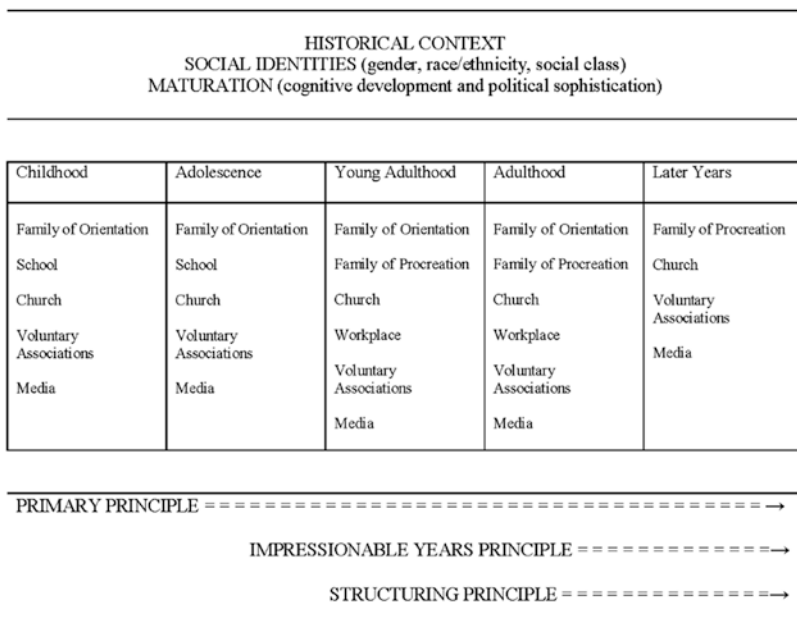


Fig. 1.1 A Life-Course Model of Political Socialization

## NOTES

1. Among the most widely quoted of these books were Dawson and Prewitt (1969), Jaros (1973), Langton (1969).
2. See: Davies (1965), Dawson and Prewitt (1969), Easton and Dennis (1969), Greenstein (1965), Hess and Torney (1967), Hyman (1959), Jaros (1973), Jennings and Niemi (1974).
3. For example, in his classic work, *Personality and Social Change*, Theodore Newcomb (1943) had demonstrated that, when people are placed in an environment with prevailing norms contrary to those previously held, they characteristically change their positions. Anthony Downs (1957), in *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, had argued cogently that partisan preferences and voting behavior are highly responsive to individuals' current calculations of their own and the national interest.
4. Searing et al. (1973); A similar critical review of the early research noted its lack of careful theoretical work for adopting the simplifying assumption that what happened early in life was fully determinative of later thinking and behavior. It suggested that political socialization research could be "reborn" by abandoning the hypothesis in favor of more tenable positions such as: "intergenerational influences have something to do with how one thinks politically"; "generations have common influences that color their perceptions for a long time" (Niemi and Hepburn 1995).
5. However, starting around 2000, there was a resurgence of interest in early political learning (Baldi 2001; Conover and Searing 2002; Hahn 2002).
6. See: Dressel and Lipsky (1989), Lafferty (1989), Lovell and Stiehm (1989), Mazur (1986), and Singer and de Sousa (1983).
7. See: Abramson (1975), Altbach and Laufer (1972), Braungart and Braungart (1984), Dalton (1977), Delli Carpini (1986), DeMartini (1985), Feuer (1969), Flacks (1967), Inglehart (1981), Lipset and Ladd (1972).
8. See: Fendrich and Lovejoy (1988), Marwell et al. (1987), McAdam (1988), Nassi (1981), Whalen and Flacks (1989).
9. See: Braungart (1984), Campbell (1971), Hendricks and Hendricks (1971), Hudson and Binstock (1976).

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## Historical Context and Maturation

The process of making citizens is always shaped by the historical conditions under which they live and have lived, their maturation (level of cognitive development and political sophistication), and by the political meanings associated with their social identities during the periods. This chapter focuses on the first two of these fundamental ideas that are integral components of the life-course model of political socialization developed in this book.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Some basic principles of historical context influences: *period effects*, *diverse reactions to political events*, and *cohort effects* were discussed in Chap. 1. This first segment of Chap. 2 briefly describes five periods in modern American political history that embodied relatively distinct political cultures that were transmitted by the agents of political socialization of their time: the era of the Great Depression and the New Deal, the post-World War world of the 1950s, the politically turbulent 1960s, the Reagan Years of the 1980s, and the time extending from the 1992 election of Bill Clinton to the present.

#### *The Great Depression and the New Deal (1929–1939)*

The 1929 stock market crash initiated the most severe economic downturn in American history. It lasted until the outbreak of World War II (WWII), when the nation needed massive numbers of workers to produce

war materials. The war also spurred technological advances which further contributed to new employment opportunities.

By 1932, more than 24 percent of US workers, about 12 million citizens, were unemployed. Historian Arthur M. Schlesinger succinctly described the period:

In a single decade business had fallen from its summit, the bottom appeared to have dropped out of American society, and the older progressives found their forecast of social strain and vulnerability over-fulfilled. The change seems to have left behind not only business complacency but even progressive idealism itself (Schlesinger 1964).

In response to the economic crisis, President Franklin Roosevelt initiated a set of programs and regulations (the New Deal) that vastly increased the role of the federal government in the nation's economic life. These included the National Recovery Act (NRA) to control certain trade practices, wages, worker's hours, child labor, and collective bargaining; the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) to provide temporary jobs and dispense emergency and short-term government aid; the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) to insure bank deposits in member banks of the Federal Reserve System; the Security and Exchange Commission (SEC) to protect investors from fraudulent Stock Market practices; and the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to strengthen the authority of the federal government in industrial relations and the organizing power of labor unions.

The Great Depression placed economic, class-oriented political issues at the forefront of American political life. The differential rewards that the working class and middle class received were increased. Differences in lifestyles and symbols of status were magnified. The changes reinforced the tendency of working class groups to support the Democratic Party and more prosperous segments of the population to support the Republicans (Abramson 1974; Campbell et al. 1960; Fiorina 1978; Marcus 1988). The period "left lasting traces on both the meaning and political attitudes of entire generations," (Sears and Funk 1999; Anderson 1979; Beck and Kent Jennings 1991; Schuman and Scott 1989). The period also shaped the nation's "core beliefs." The preceding years had been characterized by widespread acceptance of Social Darwinism, the belief that people should get ahead on their own through hard work, coupled with a strong distrust of "big government." This belief system gave way to an emphasis

on political equality as a right for all people, regardless of social status, some degree of government intervention in the economy, and programs designed to support marginal groups (Feldman 1988).

A 1974 landmark study of the social impact of the Great Depression followed 167 children born in 1920–1921 from their school days in Oakland, CA, through the 1960s. A twenty-fifth edition of the work by Glen H. Elder, Jr. included additional analysis of how WWII and the Korean War changed the lives of the children of the Depression and a younger birth cohort (1928–1929). The parents of the children of the Depression were found to share several perspectives on matters associated with the economic hardships they encountered in the 1930s: preference for the Democratic Party, greater concern over American domestic than international problems, preoccupation with domestic problems, and an optimistic outlook toward the economic opportunities of their children.

The “children of the Depression” attained voting age in the early 1940s. Voting studies conducted during the 1940s and 1950s indicate that identification with the Democratic Party was more likely to be developed by people who came of voting age during the Depression and early war years than by people in adjacent historical periods. This was clearly evident among the offspring of deprived families in Elder’s subsequent 1958 research, even among those who were upwardly mobile.

Data from the 1958 interviews also indicated that, like their parents, the now young adult children had greater political interest in domestic issues. The problems on which they focused included the development of a culture of excessive materialism, and economic issues such as wasteful spending, the inequalities of taxation, and the possibility of recession or another depression. Attitudes toward United States involvement in international affairs were unrelated to experiences in the Depression. Additional findings of the 1958 study are described in the following section.

### *The Post-War Period (1945–1959)*

Shortly before the official end of WWII, Congress passed the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act (the G.I. Bill of Rights). In addition to establishing veterans’ hospitals, providing for vocational rehabilitation and making low-interest loans available, the legislation granted tuition and living expenses to veterans attending colleges and trade schools. By 1947, veterans accounted for 49 percent of college admissions. By the time the G.I. Bill expired in 1956, roughly 2.2 million veterans had used its benefits to attend colleges and universities (Olson 1973).

Attaining a college education influences individuals' political orientations in several ways. Education involves the acquisition of cognitive skills that stimulate political interest and promote political activity (Nie et al. 1996). Those who have a higher level of education are more likely to have opinions on a wide range of political topics, to discuss politics with others, and to feel more confident in discussions with a more diverse group of people. They tend to have a stronger sense of civic obligation and believe they can influence government through their actions. They also tend to have higher levels of social and political tolerance and to express satisfaction with their political environment (Conway 2000).

As a consequence of the G.I. Bill, colleges and universities entered the lives of veterans as agents of political socialization. They also were relevant to the socialization of future citizens in two additional ways. First, the former servicemen and women were likely to transmit at least some of their newly acquired political perspectives to their families. Second, their children themselves were more likely to attain higher levels of education with similar politically relevant consequences (Almond and Verba 1963). It is not surprising that American families, at least white, middle class, nuclear families endorsing traditional gender roles, were optimistic about the future of their families and their country (Elder 1999). Potential threats to this sanguine view tended to be ignored.

Racial and class divisions were concealed beneath an aura of unity in the aftermath of the War. post-World War II America presented itself as a unified nation, politically harmonious and blessed with widespread affluence. Emerging triumphant from a war fought against racist and fascist regimes, and prosperous from the booming war time economy, the United States embraced its position as the "leader of the free world" (May 2008).

Following WWII, considerable tension developed between the United States and the Soviet Union and their respective allies. The United States feared permanent Soviet domination of Eastern Europe and the prospect of Soviet-influenced Communist parties coming to power throughout the world. The possibility of the global spread of Communism was viewed as a threat to the post-war "American way of life" which was based on capitalism and provided security, some degree of affluence, and equality of opportunity to all citizens.

During the early years of the post-war period, anti-communism was the predominant feature of American political culture. Sixty-eight percent of

the public believed that the Communist Party in the country should be forbidden by law. Seventy-seven percent favored a law requiring all members of the Communist Party in the country to register with the Department of Justice in Washington. Nearly three-fourths of those polled expressed the belief that Communists should not be allowed to teach in American schools, colleges, and universities (Shrunk 1950).

Unlike World War II when the superior military-industrial productivity of the United States was the most important factor in victory, education was considered the key to Cold War success. The United States and the Soviet Union confronted one another as the self-proclaimed vanguards of rival new world orders, a confrontation with superior methodologies for instilling values consistent with their respective planetary visions. Winning the Cold War necessitated that the leaders in the United States and the Soviet Union strive to win the hearts and minds of their own citizen-subjects (Hartman 2008).

Winning hearts and minds in the 1950s would involve political socialization carried out in American homes, schools, churches, workplaces, voluntary organizations, and by the mass media. Whatever overall influence these agents may have had, their impact on the “children of the Depression” was limited. Elder’s 1958 interviews revealed that, when asked for their views on the most important problems facing the nation, despite the Cold War climate, only a third mentioned international problems of one kind or another, including global war, and only 10 percent mentioned issues such as domestic Communism or subversion (Elder 1999).

Several prominent analysts of domestic American politics of the 1950s argued that the period saw little conflict of any consequence. Political debate, such as it was, involved disagreement over a little more or a little less government ownership and economic planning. According to Seymour Martin Lipset (1963):

the workers (had) achieved industrial and political citizenship; the conservatives (had) accepted the Welfare State; the democratic Left (had) recognized that an increase in over-all state power carries with it more dangers to freedom than solutions for economic problems (442–443).

Similarly, Daniel Bell (1960) argued that in the 50s, there was in the United States, and in other Western nations as well, a rough consensus on political issues: the acceptance of the Welfare State, the desirability of decentralized power, a system of mixed economy and of political pluralism.



Questions remained about whether such apparent agreement actually reflected widespread citizen satisfaction with the factual conditions of the American political economic order. Rather, as Murray Edelman argued, public political quiescence had been achieved through symbolic reassurances by the government transmitted by public agents of political socialization such as the mass media and the schools (Edelman 1964).

According to Edelman, regulatory agencies created as part of the New Deal, such as the National Labor Relations Board, the Inter State Commerce Commission, and the Office of Price Administration, rather than protecting the economic interests of the public, operated only symbolically in this fashion. Analysis of their actual operations showed that they should be understood as economic and political instruments of the corporations they were supposed to regulate.

In the 1950s, there were significant differences in the social-political perspectives of the more and the less affluent segments of American society. Data clearly indicated that those with fewer resources did not tend to believe that individual hard work is always rewarded. They tended to see social factors rather than individual factors as primarily responsible for the distribution of wealth and income. They did not accept the idea that individual hard work is always rewarded; they tended to see social structures rather than individual factors as primarily responsible for the distribution of wealth and income. They did not tend to believe that one's vote gives one a share of control over the system. Nor did they believe that there is any guarantee that, in the long run, individual interests are represented when politics are decided. They did not think the political system works as it should because it does not redistribute resources and equalize political and social opportunities (Huber and Form 1973).

During the post-WWII period, despite such different perspectives among citizens, America did not experience disruptive political conflict. There were no influential political groups organized around competing ideologies such as socialism, communism, or fascism. Political differences did not tend to coincide with clashes between economic, racial, ethnic, religious, or other groups. Citizens were willing to tolerate conflicting political perspectives in part because such conflict had such low salience. A sense of disengagement from government gave them the capacity to bear political conflicts without excessive discomfort (Lane 1962).

*The Turbulent 60s and Early 70s (1960–1975)*

Potentially divisive issues that received remarkably little attention in the post-WWII period emerged as sources of dramatic political conflict during the following 15 years. Long-standing issues of race and gender inequality suddenly propelled millions of citizens, particularly the young, into the political arena. Two problems were added: the development of what was to become a vastly unpopular war and increasing public concern with the environment. The development of widely supported social movements responding to numerous social problems was the hallmark of this political period.

Race issues attracted considerable public attention in 1954 with the US Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* that racial segregation in the public schools was unconstitutional. The race issue was dramatized the following year with the now historic arrest of Rosa Parks who refused to give her seat to a white man on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama. Her arrest, detention, and conviction sparked a boycott of the city bus system, organized by Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. Despite vigorous resistance to its desegregation rulings, the Court went on to rule unanimously against racial segregation on interstate buses. Two years after the powerful symbolic act of Rosa Parks, Congress approved the *Civil Rights Act of 1957*, the first such bill since Reconstruction, to protect voting rights.

Against this background, the 1960s unfolded its dramatic history of citizen mobilization in protest of racial inequality in America. In February, 1960, sit-ins began when four black college students in Greensboro, NC, refused to move from a Woolworth lunch counter after being denied service. By September, 1961, more than 70,000 students, black and white, had participated in sit-ins. The year also saw the initiation of “freedom rides” from Washington, DC across the Deep South to protest segregation in interstate transportation.

In 1963, an estimated 200,000 joined the “March on Washington,” led by Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. in support of black demands for equal rights. Eleven months later, President Lyndon Johnson signed the omnibus *Civil Rights Bill* banning discrimination in voting, jobs, and public accommodations. However, violence in the following years indicated that issues of race had not been fully resolved. Three young civil rights workers were murdered in Mississippi, black leaders Martin Luther King,

Jr. and Malcolm X were assassinated and race riots erupted in predominately black neighborhoods of Los Angeles, Newark, and Detroit.

While serious issues of racial inequality persisted, and protests continued, American military involvement in Vietnam increasingly attracted public attention. As part of its Cold War strategy designed to contain the global spread of Communist governments, as early as 1950 the United States had been providing military advisors to help defeat Communist forces in South East Asia.

In 1955, two new nation-states were created out of the former Indochina: North and South Vietnam. The former became a Communist state supported by Russia and China, while the non-Communist South Vietnamese government was backed by the United States. North Vietnam, aided by indigenous guerrilla forces, the Vietcong, sought to take over South Vietnam. In August, 1964, Congress supported military action in Vietnam after North Vietnamese boats reportedly attacked two United States destroyers in the Tonkin Gulf. Five months later, President Lyndon Johnson ordered bombing below the twentieth parallel and committed hundreds of thousands of troops to defend South Vietnam. Massive bombing raids continued against North Vietnam and border areas of Laos and Cambodia. By the end of 1966, more than 385,000 US troops were stationed in South Vietnam plus 60,000 offshore and 33,000 in neighboring Thailand.

US military efforts were unsuccessful, and a cease-fire agreement was signed by the United States, North and South Vietnam, and the Vietcong. The South Vietnamese regime surrendered in 1975. North Vietnam assumed control and began transforming South Vietnam into part of a Communist nation-state. The country was officially reunited in 1976. In the conflict, the United States suffered more than 58,000 fatalities.

There was widespread and often intense public opposition to the war. For example, in 1969 what is believed to be the largest anti-war protest in United States history took place in Washington, DC attended by more than 250,000 “mostly youthful” citizens (Herbers 1969). College and university campuses were among the earliest sites of organized opposition to the war (Schreiber 1973). Every male who turned 17 between 1965 and 1974 was required to register for military service. It would seem that, as a matter of self-interest, young male citizens, whether students or not, would oppose American military involvement in Vietnam. However, while self-interest did lead those subject to the draft to pay considerably more attention to news about

the war, self-interest was not an important determinant of their attitudes (Delli Carpini 1986). Rather, support or opposition was more closely associated with previously established attitudes toward various political symbols associated with the war: anti-communism and liberalism–conservatism (Lau et al. 1978).

The presence of co-opt-able communication networks and the presence of anti-war organizations facilitated the spread of anti-war sentiments and activities among young citizens in colleges and universities (Freeman 1983). Elsewhere, media coverage of the war cultivated critical attitudes among members of the general public, who came to see the military engagement as a “military and moral quicksand” (Hallin 1989).

While much of the 60s and early 70s political activism in America directly confronted problems of war and race, additional issues engaged citizens, particularly the young. College and university campuses experienced not only protests of various forms focused on these issues but also protests responding to official reactions to their activities. Across the country, college and university administrators vigorously attempted to control or repress student protest in its many forms. From the University of California at Berkeley to the University of Michigan to Columbia University, students demonstrated and formed organizations in defense of what they considered their right to free speech and their perceived right to play some role in the governance of their institutions (Sampson 1967; Lipset 1967; Lipset 1971; Orum 1972; Altbach 1974).

In the 1960s and early 70s, women across the nation organized to confront a variety of long-standing gender-related concerns (Freeman, 1973; Evans 1979; Berkeley 1999; Goldschmidt et al. 1974; Mueller 1994; Worell and Worell 1977; Travis 1973; Morgan 1970). Alerted by Betty Friedan’s 1963 book *The Feminine Mystique* that exposed the quiet desperation of millions of housewives trapped in their homes, women openly questioned the enduring structure of gender relations and joined the National Organization of Women (NOW), which Friedan founded, to attack a host of related problems.

Earlier feminists had focused on suffrage and overturning legal obstacles to gender equality, particularly voting rights and property rights. This “second wave” of feminism addressed a wide variety of issues including reproductive rights, domestic violence, maternity leave, equal pay, sexual harassment, sexual violence, and de facto inequality. They formed organizations at the national, state, and local levels and within occupational associations to confront one or several of these issues, often with appreciable success. For example, more women now entered traditionally male professions such as business, law, medicine, and politics.

Even prior to the formation of NOW, women's rights were advanced by the addition of "women" in Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act that outlawed major forms of discrimination against racial, ethnic, national, and religious minorities. However, efforts had been made since 1923 to add an "Equal Rights Amendment" to the US Constitution. The Amendment succinctly stated that: "(Section 1) Equality of Rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States nor any state on account of sex. (Section 2) The Congress shall have the power to enforce by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article. (Section 3) This Amendment shall take effect two years after the date of ratification." The Amendment passed Congress in 1972, but was not ratified by the necessary 38 states by the July, 1982 deadline. Major issues remained. Women's wages continued to be less than those of men, the number of female-headed households was increasing, and the number of those households living in poverty was growing.

The activism of the 60s and 70s introduced significant change in American political culture. Protests on campuses and in the cities "whether aimed at issues of civil rights, the war, or narrower issues of campus politics, became emblematic of a new approach to political involvement in the United States."<sup>1</sup>

### *The Reagan Years (1980–1992)*

In the mid-1970s, widespread political activism expressing liberal perspectives was giving way to a conservative era in which priority was given to individual and economic interests rather than social and public concerns (Schlesinger Jr. 1986). In 1980, President Jimmy Carter became the first elected president to be voted out of office since 1932 when Franklin Roosevelt defeated Herbert Hoover and introduced New Deal liberalism. This represented a "party realignment" in which the overall balance of support in the electorate shifts from one political party to another (Burnham 1970; Petroic 1981; Sundquist 1983).

The election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 initiated a systematic growth in the number of citizens identifying with the Republican Party. This ended the Democrat's congressional dominance that had persisted since the New Deal. While the Republicans did not achieve outright majority status, the new alignment meant that the two major parties would compete on nearly equal terms in national politics (Meffert et al. 2001). The realignment also resulted in clearer ideological differences between the parties and made

it easier for citizens to choose a party identification based on their policy preferences (Abramowitz and Saunders 1998).

Both domestic and international conditions existing at the time contributed to Reagan's election. The public was concerned with the performance of the economy. The unemployment rate had risen from 4.5 percent in 1965 to 7.1 percent in 1980. The consumer price index (measuring inflation) had gone from 31.5 in 1965 to 82.4 in 1980. During the same period, the Federal Reserve Discount Rate (indicating interest rates) rose from 4 percent to 13 percent (Bureau of Labor Statistics 1981). During the presidential campaign, Republicans had repeatedly claimed that institutionalized liberal economic policies were largely responsible for this unacceptable "misery index."

In late 1979, a group of young Islamic militants took over the United States embassy in Teheran in support of the Iranian revolution, taking more than 60 US citizens hostage. President Jimmy Carter called the hostages victims of terrorism and their act a violation of international laws granting diplomats immunity from arrest and diplomatic compounds' inviolability. The "hostage crisis" received an unmatched amount of US media coverage (Meeske and Javaheri 1982).

Prevailing economic conditions and the apparent inability of the US military to control world events were among the most important immediate factors influencing the election of Ronald Reagan. However, long-term trends also played a fundamental role in accounting for the Republican victory and a reconsideration of New Deal policies. Before discussing these historical shifts, it is important to consider the changes Reagan advocated that define the period of his influence as a relatively distinct historical context.

Chief among Reagan's economic priorities was a significant reduction in government spending (Danziger and Haverman 1981). He advocated several spending cuts that affected the middle class. These included reductions for Social Security, veteran's disability compensation, Medicare, civil service retirement, and guaranteed student loans. In any event, it was benefits for the poor that faced the deepest cuts (Pear 1982). These included funding for welfare programs, child nutrition, Medicaid, social services block grants, education aid, food stamps, low-income energy assistance, and various training and employment programs.

From the onset of his presidency, Reagan very simply stated his anti-New Deal perspective that: "In the present crisis, government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem" (Reagan 1981).

With respect to cutting programs that essentially served the poor, Reagan expressed his belief that government welfare programs serve as a disincentive to work; the less the government helps the poor, ultimately the more they will help themselves and the better off they will be.

Reagan advocated additional conservative policies including reduction of federal income tax and the capital gains tax. He particularly favored reduction of corporate taxes and eliminating numerous federal regulations of corporate activities. He argued that the actions were the best ways to stimulate corporate growth, the benefits of which would “trickle down” to the rest of the economy.

While Reagan called for elimination or reduction of spending for numerous social programs, he actively supported a vast increase in the military budget. Recent military history had suggested that the status of the United States as the world’s sole “superpower” was in doubt. Prior to the ongoing Iranian hostage crisis, the United States had been defeated in Vietnam. The 1970s had seen the triumph of a left-wing government in Angola and the threat of a Marxist take over in Nicaragua. The Soviet Union was attempting to control Afghanistan. Reagan regarded Communism as an immoral ideology and believed the Soviet Union was bent on world domination. During his first five years in office, he expanded the military budget by 40 percent (Bartels 1991).

There has been considerable discussion of the conditions that facilitated party realignment and Reagan’s efforts to restructure America’s political economy. Researchers have proposed three alternative explanations for the partisan change: conversion, mobilization, and generation replacement (Norpoth 1987).

According to the conversion theory, the self-identification of those who support the majority party is subject to revision when they are so profoundly dissatisfied with their party’s performance or their party’s issue orientations that they “convert” to the minority party. Realignment occurs on occasions when short-term forces run so decisively against the party in power (such as high unemployment, high inflation, and a series of military set-backs) that a large segment of the electorate makes such a change (Fiorina 1981; Franklin and Jackson 1983). In order of importance, ideology, parents’ political activity, and age were found to be statistically significant influences in the decision to switch parties (Clark et al. 1991). Mobilization theory contends that realignment occurs when people who previously did not identify with either major party are marshaled into the ranks of partisans. Such citizens include immigrants, new voters,

and habitual non-voters. This was most clearly the case during the rise and subsequent long-term support of the New Deal (Anderson 1979). Generational replacement theory maintains that party realignment takes place gradually as young voters, with a distinctive set of political orientations reflecting their unique historical experiences, enter the electorate and gradually replace the older cohort. In contrast to the view of the early political socialization researchers that, for the most part, stable political attachments are handed down from one generation to the next, primarily in the context of families, the position emphasizes the importance of peers as socializing agents.

There is extensive empirical evidence both supporting and calling into question each of the theories of realignment. What is important for present purposes is that each identifies social forces that contribute to the continuity and modification of political orientations at both the individual and social levels. Each clearly recognizes the importance of historical contexts in shaping the political perspective transmitted by various agents of political socialization.

#### *The Post-Reagan Years (1993–Present)*

Party realignment did not follow the conclusions of Reagan's presidency and the succeeding presidency of his former running mate, George H.W. Bush, in 1992. The "Post-Reagan Years," beginning with the election of Bill Clinton and continuing to the present, do not fully constitute a "political era" in the sense in which the periods discussed above were "eras" and those who responded politically to their unique circumstances constitute a "political generation." The relative constancy of America's political culture occurs despite popular reference to those born between 1965 and 1980 as "generation x" and those born between 1981 and 1997 as the "millennial generation." However, there are three features of more recent political culture that are important to understanding ongoing political socialization: the decline of broad citizen support for New Deal liberalism, increasing polarization of the electorate, and the decline of trust in government.

In the 1992 presidential debates, Clinton clearly differentiated some of his major policy preferences from those of Ronald Reagan. Among other issues, he argued in favor of increasing taxes of citizens earning extremely high incomes and cutting defense spending.



I believe we can increase investment and reduce the deficit if we not only ask the wealthiest Americans to pay their share, we also provide \$100 billion in tax relief and \$140 billion of spending cuts. Take money from defense cuts and reinvest in transportation, communications and environmental clean-up systems (Clinton-Bush-Perot Presidential Debate 1992).

Clinton also enforced social policies conventionally considered “liberal” on issues such as abortion, the environment, and health care. On the fourth day of his presidency, which coincided with the twentieth anniversary of the Supreme Court’s *Roe v. Wade* decision,<sup>2</sup> he issued a series of executive orders undoing limitations imposed during the Reagan and Bush administrations. Subsequently, he supported legislation requiring Medicaid to pay for abortions for poor women.

Clinton selected a vice president and heads of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Department of the Interior who had environmental commitments. He established offices within the Department of Justice to address issues of environmental justice, and the State Department began focusing on environmental security threats. He also proposed the largest budgets ever for wildlife protection and preservation of national parks and placed over 3 million acres of land off-limits to development by declaring them “national monuments.”

Clinton proposed a health care plan requiring US citizens and permanent resident aliens to become enrolled in a qualified health plan and forbade their disenrollment until covered by another plan. It listed minimum coverage and maximum out-of-pocket expenses for each plan. People below a certain set income level were to pay nothing. The plan contained an enforced mandate for employers to provide health insurance coverage to all of their employees through competitive but closely regulated health maintenance organizations.

While Clinton advocated such social policies, he often asserted that he was a “different kind of Democrat,” a centrist who wanted to revitalize the Democratic Party as support for New Deal liberalism continued to decline (Freeman 1986).

“Since the late 1960s, the public (had) come to associate liberalism with tax and spend policies that contradict the interest of average families; with welfare policies that foster dependency rather than self-reliance; with softness toward the perpetrators of crime and indifference toward the victims; with ambivalence toward assertion of American values and interests abroad, and with an adversarial stance toward mainstream moral and cultural values” (Kamarck and Galston 1989).

While the “new kind of Democrat” found support from many citizens who identified themselves as ideologically liberal for his positions on domestic issues such as abortion, the environment, and health care, he worried some traditional Democrats for his tendency to favor cash and tax credits over the establishment of federal bureaucracies. He angered some of his strongest supporters in the labor movement when, in December 1993, he signed into law the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

The explicit intent of the legislation was to expand trade between the United States, Canada, and Mexico, and to make the countries more competitive in the global marketplace. Critics of the Treaty argued that it would lead to major job losses for American workers, as corporations moved across the border to Mexico to take advantage of low worker wages<sup>3</sup> and a general lack of government regulation of working conditions.<sup>4</sup>

Clinton’s acceptance of the free market principles embodied in the NAFTA legislation signaled his rejection of New Deal liberalism. The Treaty gained support from such conservative organizations as the National Association of Manufacturers. Perhaps the most succinct and simple expression of his view occurred in his 1996 State of the Union address:

We know big government does not have all the answers. We know there’s not a program for every problem. We have worked to give the American people a smaller, less bureaucratic government in Washington. And we have to give the American people one that lives within its means. The era of big government is over.

New Deal liberalism advanced policies that have remained widely popular from their inception to the present. These include Social Security, Medicare, unemployment insurance, a host of health, safety and related workplace regulations, progressive income taxes, and minimum wage. However, over the past several decades, “liberal” has become an ideological label designating something very different from its policy achievements. “New Democrats” assiduously avoid the label and fewer citizens identify themselves as “liberals.”<sup>5</sup>

Since Clinton’s election, there has been a continuation of the ideological polarization of the Democratic and Republican parties that began during the Reagan era. This produced “party sorting”—an increasing correlation between policy views and partisan identification (Fiorna and

Abrams 2008). Clearer differences between the parties' ideological positions made it easier for citizens to choose a party identification based on their policy preferences (Abramowitz and Saunders 1998).

Clinton frequently expressed his opposition to "big government," a term commonly understood as synonymous with the derisive label "welfare liberalism." However, he also moved quickly to reward interest groups that had supported his candidacy by announcing socially liberal policies such as permitting gays and lesbians to serve openly in the military and ending the ban on abortion counseling in federally funded health care clinics (Abramowitz and Saunders 1998; Quirk and Hinchcliff 1996).

"Party sorting" has continued largely on the basis of moral and cultural issues. Much of the public has divided into two value camps: the culturally orthodox who hold traditional, religiously based views of morality, and the culturally progressive who hold modern secular, relativist views (Hunter 1991). In turn, such differing value systems provide a basis for political polarization over policies widely seen as embodying incompatible ethical principles (Himmelfarb 2001). At least since the 1990s, Republicans and Democrats have had acrimonious debates over topics such as abortion, church-state relations, same-sex marriage, and embryonic stem-cell research. Other issues, which are not manifestly economic and are clearly linked to differing value orientations, have also been markedly divisive. These include education, global warming, gun control, and immigration. These issues are useful to conservative political candidates because voters who agree with their liberal opponents on economic policies often disagree with their positions on one or more of these social issues. This provides an opportunity for conservatives to win their allegiance (Domhoff 2010).

Increased polarization on the basis of moral and cultural issues has resulted in a gradual increase in the proportion of Republican identifiers and a corresponding decrease in the proportion of Democratic identifiers in the electorate. Republican gains have been uneven among different groups of voters. The largest gains have occurred among groups with conservative policy preferences, such as white males and white southerners. There has been a substantial intergenerational shift in party identification in favor of the GOP—today's voters are considerably more Republican and less Democratic than were their parents (Abramowitz and Saunders 1998). This is not primarily the result of voters switching from Democratic to Republican affiliation, but because, as new voters adopt a party identity, they do so in accordance with the religious-secular divide. Young voters

are more likely than their elders to reflect the partisan divide defined by religiosity (Campbell 2002).

Evolving information technologies also played a role in the political polarization of the citizenry. The traditional news media—radio, television, newspapers, and news magazines—were expected by the public to maintain a “principled adherence to the norms of objectivity, deference to facticity and authority, and a let-the-chips-fall-where-they-may distance for political and social consequences of their coverage” (Cook 2005). However, whenever citizens confronted material that was discrepant with what they already believed, they complained of media bias (Stevenson and Green 1980).

Many commentators on the traditional mainstream news media claimed that coverage was inherently biased. Some asserted that the media were liberal as a result of an assumed liberal perspective held by a majority of leading American journalists (Berryhill 1994; Goldberg 2002; Lichter et al. 1986). Those arguing that the news media exhibited a conservative bias pointed to the corporate ownership and profit orientation of the media and the media’s dependence on corporations and other elite sources of information (Alterman 2003; Croteau and Hoynes 1994; Herman and Chomsky 1988; Hartsgaard 1989).<sup>6</sup> Whatever the case, most citizens accepted reporting at face value, believed that the mainstream mass media offered them multi-perspectival news, and were interested in keeping up with events rather than becoming politically involved (Gans 2003).

In the early 1990s, a fall off began in traditional news media usage (Center 1996). New information technologies began to change fundamentally how citizens obtained and disseminated political information. The internet made possible political communication that was more immediate, less passive, and less mediated. It also made it easier to locate information supporting one’s own political perspectives and find people who were political allies while avoiding dissonant information and political opponents. This polarizes public opinion and stimulates partisan political participation (Gainous and Wagner 2011).

Two events during this most recent historical period have played significant roles in shaping American political culture: the terrorist attack on New York’s World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, and the election, for the first time, of an African American, Barack Obama, to the US presidency.

Citizen reactions to mass media reporting on the 2001 terrorist attack (9/11) illustrate the principle that similar messages from similar agents of

political socialization can produce different public responses in different historical contexts. The language used by political leaders and the mainstream media defined the attacks as acts of “war” and some characterized them as this generation’s Pearl Harbor. Some media commentators suggested that “terrorists” replaced “communists” as America’s number one enemy (Denton 2004). The perceived threats posed by Pearl Harbor, domestic communism, and 9/11 each put the nation “at a balancing point between a new engagement with the world or a new xenophobia, between a new appreciation of our freedoms, and a willingness to trade some of them away for security, between blind vengeance and calculated justice” (Hoyt 2001).

Public opinion following the Pearl Harbor attacks made it possible for the US government to remove forcefully more than 120,000 Japanese Americans from their homes on the West Coast to detention camps in violation of their fundamental civil liberties. While reactions to admitted Communists in the 1950s were not as harsh, nevertheless 77 percent of the public agreed that they should have their citizenship revoked (Stouffer 1955). Stouffer’s seminal study of support for civil liberties during the 1950s and a replication 20 years later concluded that it is education and exposure to cultural and social diversity that encourages citizen appreciation for the importance of civil liberties for democracy (Williams Jr. and Peter 1976).

The proportion of the US population 25 years old and older who have completed high school or college rose steadily from approximately 24 percent in 1940 to approximately 92 percent in 2014. This reflects more than a three-fold increase in high school graduates and more than a five-fold increase in college graduates since the Census Bureau first collected educational attainment data in 1940. Ethnic diversity in America has been increasing to the point where the US Census Bureau has projected that non-Hispanic whites will no longer be the majority of the population by 2042. These changes have promoted new public understandings about what constitutes American identity and have restricted the range of ethnicity-based policies citizens will tolerate (Schildkraut 2002).

Despite the fact that political socialization was occurring in the historical context of a comparatively culturally diverse and well-educated society, 39 percent of citizens related to 9/11 by agreeing that they “personally have been more suspicious of people they think are of Arab descent” and 30 percent said they would favor allowing the federal government “to hold Arabs who are American citizens” in camps until it can be determined

whether they have links to terrorist organizations (Schnildkraut 2002). This suggests that, at least in the context of a perceived threat to national security, psychological factors as well as related social-cultural variables may play a prominent role in accounting for support or lack of support for civil liberties. Research exploring this possibility has drawn on some of the earliest political socialization studies concerned with family child-rearing practices (Greenstein 1965; Crowson et al. 2006; Oswald 2005).

Increased social diversity and levels of education in the United States improved the chance that an African American could be elected president in 2008. However, data indicated that, in 2008, blacks and whites remained as far apart in their levels of support for policies designed to alleviate racial inequality as they did in 1988. Furthermore, younger cohorts of whites (those experiencing more diversity and education than had older generations) were found to be no more racially liberal than they were in 2008. In 2008, anti-black stereotyping and indifference to black inequality were strong correlates of opposition to Obama's candidacy (Hutchings 2009). However, experimental evidence suggests that further exposure to Obama, a positive counter stereotype exemplar, could result in a decrease in implicit anti-black prejudice (Columb and Ashby Plant 2011). Whatever the case, significant increases in the proposition of minority voters is likely to influence election outcomes and affect American political culture and structure. In the 2012 presidential election, racial minorities constituted 28 percent of those voting. The vast majority of those supported Obama (African Americans 93 percent, Latinos 71 percent, and Asian Americans 73 percent).

Level of trust and confidence in government constitutes a third major component of the most recent historical context in which the consequences of citizens' previous and continuing political socialization play out. As such, it has been the subject of academic interest for decades.<sup>7</sup> Pioneering studies of political socialization, described in Chaps. 1 and 3, focused on the origins of such orientations largely because of their presumed importance to citizen willingness to incur costs such as paying taxes, and serving in the military, and to their readiness to obey laws. Subsequently, studies have expressed the broader concern that low levels represent some threat to the maintenance of civilian rule, representative institutions, and public liberties. The following discussion questions: What does "trust and confidence in government" mean? What have been the recent levels of such orientations? What causes of fluctuations in levels have been suggested? What are the implications of the present level of trust and confidence in government?

Most basically, trust and confidence in government is an evaluation of “whether or not political authorities and institutions are performing in accordance with normative expectations held by the public” (Miller and Listhaug 1990). Citizens tend to base their evaluations on their perceptions of the fairness, openness, and responsiveness of government processes (Anderson et al. 2005).

Decades of research have employed the following items, developed by the American National Elections Center at the University of Michigan, to measure levels of trust, and confidence in government:

1. How much of the time do you think you can trust the government to do what is right—just about always, most of the time, or only some of the time?
2. Would you say the government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves or what is run for the people?

As Cook and Gronke (2005) correctly pointed out, low levels of trust and confidence, as indicated by responses to such questions is not equivalent to active distrust. Rather, they suggest that it reflects *skepticism*, an unwillingness to presume that political authorities should be given the benefit of the doubt (784–803). “Democratic political culture is characterized by a realistic cynicism rather than by unquestioning faith in the motives and abilities of political authorities” (Citrin 1974).

Nevertheless, numerous studies have concluded that such political skepticism has been increasing among citizens over the past decades to levels that present some challenges to the American polity.<sup>8</sup> Gallup’s 2014 annual “Mood of the Nation” poll found that 65 percent of Americans expressed dissatisfaction with the US system of government and its effectiveness, agreeing the government was too big and too powerful. This represents a significant increase in the percentage of Americans expressing such a view in 2002 after the 9/11 terrorist attack when fewer than one in four showed such a concern (McCarthy 2014).

While there seems to be widespread concurrence among social scientists that levels of trust in government have been remarkably low in recent decades, there is no such consensus about the causes of this feature of American political cultures. Political skepticism, lack of trust, or lack of optimism has been attributed to, among other sources: public disapproval of incumbent politicians (Williams 1985), scandals associated with congress and public concern about crime (Chanley et al. 2000), post-

modernization (the development of values having no direct relation to the need for economic security, but to associational, aesthetic, and intellectual needs (Inglehart 1999), quality of public service (Ryzin and Gregg 2007), televised incivility (Mutz and Reeves 2005), economic instability and recession (Nye Jr. 1997), and party polarization (King 1997).

Low levels of trust in government have been linked to low levels of citizen political involvement, particularly voting turnout (Putnam 2001; Craig 1996; Hetherington 1998). Low levels of trust raise questions about the legitimacy of government. Strong democracy requires an engaged citizenry (Barber 1984). Such engagement is unlikely in the absence of trust.

## MATURATION

As used in the life-course model of political socialization, *maturation* refers to two related processes: *cognitive development* and *increasing political sophistication*. Each of these concepts has been employed widely to understand how the social–psychological characteristics of citizens and the historical–social contexts in which they have lived, have influenced their learning particular political beliefs, values, attitudes, and patterns of participation. Discussion of cognitive development appeared in the early political socialization literature that focused on children’s political learning, roughly from ages 2 or 3 to ages 11 or 12. Studies of developing political sophistication have focused on the complexity, range, and organization of citizens’ political belief systems (PBS). Both of these learning processes are discussed briefly below and further in Chaps. 4, 5, and 6.

### *Cognitive Development*

It has been suggested that cognitive development constitutes a link between political socialization and biology because it involves the inextricable connection between genes and experience (Peterson 1983).<sup>9</sup> Analysis was prompted by recognition that more recent political socialization research has attended to the contents of political learning, but not to the actual process by which the learning takes place (Sigel 1966; Cundy 1979).

At present, there is no universally accepted theory of cognitive development to employ in analyses of political socialization as a lifelong process. There is also much to learn about the ways in which people interpret and reconstruct the messages they receive from socializing agents—subsequently accepting some and rejecting others. Additionally, there is need



for further discussion of the ways in which historical and cultural factors linked to social identities impact developmental processes. All of this is true now as it was when Judith Torney-Purta (1995) offered these observations. However, for purposes here, it is sufficient to note that individuals' cognitive development should be taken into account when considering citizens' political socialization at various points in their life course.

### *Political Sophistication*

There is controversy within the research literature concerning the meaning of "political sophistication," how the variable is to be measured, the factors that interfere with or promote its development, the distribution of political sophistication in the public and its consequences for political behavior. The following discussion is intended to reflect positions on these topics where there appears to be at least some consensus. Some issues about which there is no apparent consensus and contradictory research findings abound will be identified.

Drawing on the works of Campbell et al. (1960) and Converse (1964),<sup>10</sup> Robert Luskin offers a succinct characterization of political sophistication (Luskin 1987). His discussion refers to the PBS of the individual. This is their total set of cognitions about political issues, actors, conditions, and events. "*Size* refers to the number of cognitions a PBS contains. Some people might as well be living on Neptune for all they know about politics; others are walking *Washington Posts* or *New York Timeses*. *Range* refers to the variety of topics considered in the PBS such as social security benefits, political personalities and race relations. *Constraint* refers to the extent to which cognitions are interrelated. A person is politically *sophisticated* to the extent to which his/her PBS is large, wide ranging and constrained" (Luskin 1987).

The dimensions of a PBS are interrelated. Larger PBSs tend to cover more ground, and vice versa. Both size and diversity are related to constraint. The more extensive and diverse the information, the more organized it will be. Organization makes retention easier and therefore more likely. Further, the more highly organized the PBS, the more abstract will be its central (organizing and enduring) elements (Luskin 1987).

Philip Converse's influential study offers descriptions of PBSs at various levels of sophistication as well as subsequently supported estimates of their distribution among American citizens. He finds that as one moves from

elite sources of a PBS, such as politicians and journalists, downward on an information scale several changes occur. Constraint declines—increasingly one finds not only individuals whose PBSs contain logical inconsistencies but also who even lack information about the identity of the objects of political beliefs and attitudes. Among the less educated, the range of PBSs becomes narrower and narrower. The character of the objects that are central in their belief systems also changes. Abstract principles are replaced by increasingly simple and concrete objects such as particular social groupings or charismatic leaders, and finally “close to home” objects such as family and job.<sup>11</sup>

Only 2.5 percent of Converse’s sample made active use of an abstract conceptual dimension such as liberal–conservative in understanding and evaluating political parties, political programs, and public figures. Another 9 percent mentioned such a dimension but did not appear to have full understanding of its meaning or to really use it in understanding and judging the objects of their political world. The majority of the sample, 42 percent, made no use of an abstract conceptual dimension. Rather, they understood and evaluated parties, policies, and candidates in terms of their expected favorable or unfavorable treatments of various social groupings in their environment such as African Americans, immigrants, farmers, and industrial workers. Another quarter of the sample used only minimal policy considerations in their understanding and evaluation. Parties and candidates were thought of and appraised primarily in terms of their temporal association in the past with broad states of war and peace, prosperity or depression. Finally, 22 percent of the sample reacted politically in ways totally unrelated to policy considerations. For example, during political campaigns such respondents directed their attention to personal qualities of candidates or felt loyal to one party or the other but could say nothing about the differences between the parties.<sup>12</sup>

Converse’s study concludes with three important assertions. First, political sophistication is positively associated with both partisanship and political activism. As many voting studies have shown, the political “independent” tends to be relatively uninformed and uninvolved. Second, party strategies differ in response to recognized differences between sophisticated and non-sophisticated audiences. Political sophistication is associated with education and social class. Hence, as one moves from the conservative parties of the relatively prosperous and well educated to liberal–radical parties of the relatively less prosperous and less educated, there is an increasingly overt stress on group loyalty and cohesion per se.

Finally, Converse observes that serious, ideological conflict between various elite groups in society may go unperceived by large segments of the public. The public is sometimes largely unaware of what elites perceive to be the principle ideological struggles of some historical periods.

Robert Lane's notable study of the PBSs of the American "common man" illustrates how abstract political concepts nevertheless can be incorporated into the political thinking of many, if not most, citizens who are far from being politically sophisticated. The ideas are central components of America's political culture: freedom, equality, and democracy.

Lane's in-depth interviews suggest that "common people" focus their attention upon the importance of economic functions in defining *freedom*. He observes that the lives of most Americans are much more concerned with the business of buying and selling, earning and disposing of things, than they are with more abstract political discussions or concepts. One could characterize the "common man's" view of freedom by the expression "I don't care what I am allowed to say, as long as I can buy what I want, work where I want, and go where I want."

The American "common man's" understanding of *equality* is also quite concrete and grounded in economic experiences. He knows that he receives less income, less difference, and less preferment in public places than numbers of the middle class. Yet, he does not respond with hostility coupled with a desire to change the system. He does not view the distribution of social rewards as being highly unjust. He is not so blind as to think he has equal opportunity with everyone else; but he "knows" that he has more opportunity than he is using.

*Democracy* in the minds of Lane's respondents referred "neither to majority rule nor to minority rights but something of a hybrid-majority rights." Democracy as a popular concept centers on the freedom of the non-deviant individual to do what the majority thinks is right. Nevertheless, there is also a general willingness to tolerate conflicting political opinion. The American "common man" does express a preference for learning more than one side of a political issue. Lane's characterization of what we might now call the ideology of the "average citizen" may be as valid today as it was in the 1960s.

This chapter has illustrated that some of the content of American political culture into which citizens have been socialized has differed by historical period. Further, within each political generation, what individuals actually absorb varies by their level of maturation. People in all generations are socialized by the same institutions. However, the structure and opera-

tion of each of these has changed historically. Chap. 3 focuses on similarities and difference of these agents over time.

## NOTES

1. Delli Carpini (1986). In this period, additional concerns also brought millions of citizens into the political arena. These included environmental problems such as pollution, land use, resource depletion, endangered species, environmental health, and energy conservation. They also included sexual orientation issues such as hate crimes, gay marriage, adoption, health care, workplace, and housing discrimination.
2. In *Roe v. Wade*, the US Supreme Court ruled that a right to privacy inherent in the Fourteenth Amendment's due process guaranteed personal liberty and protected a woman's decision to have an abortion.
3. Data later showed that NAFTA import-related job loss accounted for 24–27 percent of manufacturing job loss over the 1993–1999 period (Kletzer 2004).
4. Chapter 11 of the Agreement allowed corporations to sue governments for compensation if they felt that government action, including enforcement of public health and safety laws, cut into their profits.
5. Coggins and Stimson argue that an ideology is “an agglomeration of images resulting from a lifetime of observations of politics. It is beliefs about what people who call themselves ‘liberal’ and ‘conservative’ stand for and what they do. Because it is an agglomeration and not a construction, it is likely to take in whatever images have been public.” Since the 1960s, common images of those perceived to support or benefit from “liberal” policies have come to include, among others, counter culture participants, protestors, welfare moms, people “soft on crime,” the poor generally and the black urban poor in particular. Such images represent “liberals”—“them” not “us.” See: Coggins and Stimson (2013).
6. For an empirical assessment of the various claims of media ideological bias, see Adkins-Covert and Wasburn (2009).
7. For example, Almond and Verba (1963), Miller (1974), Wright (1976), Lipset and Schneider (1987), Garment (1991), Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (1995).

8. See Citrin (1974), Feldman (1983), Dionne (1991), Craig (1993), Nye Jr. and Zelikow (1997), Putnam (2000), Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2001), and Farnsworth (2003).
9. For a more explicit theoretical argument and accompanying data indicating that interaction between genetic heritability and social environment be incorporated into models of political socialization, see Alford et al. (2005).
10. For a further elaboration of the approach, see Sartori (1969).
11. In his study of the sources of political sophistication, Robert Luskin contends that the ability to assimilate and organize political information and the motivation to do so contribute to political sophistication but that education does not. See Luskin (1990).
12. Numerous other scholars have made similar observations about the public's general lack of political sophistication. For example, "Many of the facts known by relatively small percentages seem critical to understanding – let alone acting on – the political world: fundamental rules of the game; classic civil liberties; key concepts of political economy; the names of key political representatives; many important policy positions of presidential candidates or the political parties; basic social indicators and significant public policies" (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996).

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## Agents of Political Socialization Through the Life Course

Political socialization is carried out in families, schools, churches, workplaces, voluntary associations, and by the media. For purposes of presentation, it is necessary to discuss each of these agents of political socialization separately. In reality, the effects of any agent are modified by the influences of the others.<sup>1</sup> At any given point in time, the political orientations conveyed by different agents can be reinforcing or contradictory. Some sources have greater overall effect than do others. Some are more influential at a particular period in the life course. There is considerable controversy among scholars concerning much of this. This chapter will review some relatively well-established key findings on the roles of the various agents of political socialization in the process of making citizens. Their present and potential contributions to the promotion of political democracy will be discussed further in Chap. 8.

### FAMILY

The structure and dynamics of the American family have changed substantially since research on political socialization was initiated approximately six decades ago. The traditional family with a single male breadwinner working alone to sustain the family is no longer the norm. Already by 2000, only 23.5 percent of American households were made up of a married man and woman and one or more children—a drop from 45 percent in 1960. Among married couples with children under six years of age,

only 36 percent had the mother staying home with children and not working. About one-third of babies were born out of wedlock and divorce rates continued to climb so that nearly one-half of all marriages ended in divorce (Klein 2004).

All of this may have reduced the primacy of the family as an agent of political socialization. Nevertheless, as the decades of research on political socialization and countless voting studies conducted over the same period have decisively demonstrated, the family has played and continues to play a substantial role in making citizens. The conclusion that “Despite very different historical contexts and changes in family structure, findings about parental influence based on youth coming of age in the 1990s strongly parallel those based on youth socialized in the 1960s is not surprising” (Jennings et al. 2009).

It seems clear that children acquire many of their political orientations in unplanned ways; much of their political learning is not the result of the conscious efforts of their parents to socialize them to politics. Parents are more likely to feel other more pressing concerns about the development of their children. Furthermore, many of the beliefs and attitudes acquired in the family which later influence political behavior are not overly political. For example, the very general feeling of that, for the most part, others are trustworthy, or the belief that, on occasion, you can manipulate your environment in ways you desire, both are positively associated with political participation (Merelman 1980).

Several factors contribute to the importance of the family. It is a social system within which there is a considerable amount of interaction and to which, generally, there is deep emotional attachment. It is the first agent of socialization children experience. During the initial period of their physical, intellectual, and moral development it has virtually exclusive control over them. For a long period, it is the sole source to which they can turn for the satisfaction of all basic needs. Children identify with, act, and think like those who are regularly relevant to the satisfaction of their needs (Davies 1965). The family is hierarchically structured and serves as the first setting in which children observe and participate in processes of making social decisions.<sup>2</sup> Finally, it is through the family that people acquire many of their politically relevant social identities (Bengtson et al. 2002).

Several features of a family affect the extent to which it will exert influence on its young members on matters such as their partisanship, views on enduring issues, trust accorded the federal government, and their political engagement (interest and knowledge). These include:

### *The Relative Attractiveness of the Family to the Child*

The question of strength of attraction arises when an individual is drawn to a number of groups which have incompatible norms. For example, a young person can have parents who are staunch Republicans and highly attractive peers who are equally staunch Democrats. In such a situation where, for some reason or the other, a choice must be made, all things being equal, an individual will choose the norms of the group which is more attractive.<sup>3</sup> However, most political situations do not involve forced choices. In most contexts, such as voting, people can avoid making a choice by withdrawing from the situation and not voting.<sup>4</sup> Children with Republican parents and Democratic friends are not likely to have strong partisan feelings or to maintain a high level of interest in politics. If such weakened political orientations persist into adulthood, they are not likely to be politically engaged. More often than not, however, children will find themselves in social settings in which the political orientations of their parents will be reinforced rather than contradicted. Children tend to associate with other children from similar social locations whose parents have political views similar to those of their own parents. An analysis that fails to take into account peer and local political climate influences can overstate the case for parental direction (Bengtson et al. 2002; Campbell 2006).

### *Parental Agreement on Politics*

From the earliest voting studies onward, data indicate that, in general, family influence tends to be stronger when the members' viewpoints are homogeneous (Campbell et al. 1954; Niemi 1973). As noted, individuals with parents who support different parties are less likely to have a strong party preference than are those from families in which both parents support the same party.<sup>5</sup> In turn, weak party identification tends to be negatively associated with political involvement. According to one study, the ability of parents to instill partisan orientation is influenced by parental agreement to the extent that "whether ... parents agree with each other seems to be more important than the family's degree of interest in politics, the compatibility of family members, demographic factors such as region or personal characteristics such as race and sex" (Niemi 128).

### *Cohesiveness of the Family*

Families in which strong emotional bonds have been established and in which parents frequently discuss civic affairs with their children are more

likely to be influential in their children's political development (McClosky and Dahlgren 1959). However, where families do not establish clear partisan allegiance, the children are less likely to become politically involved when they reach maturity. Cohesive families tend to try to resolve political disagreements that arise within them through discussion (Niemi and Nunn 1998). This makes politics more salient for the family. Where politics have some primacy for children, subsequently they are more likely to participate in political life.

Political conversations need not be introduced by parents. Child-initiated discussion, possibly responding to a civics curriculum, an ongoing campaign or other prominent news event, can stimulate parents to pay greater attention to political issues. There are families in which parent-adolescent opinion concurrence was achieved by parents changing toward the child's opinion and vice versa (McDevitt and Chaffee 2002).

### *Parental Interest in Politics*

Children observe and tend to absorb the political enthusiasm of their parents (Luskin 1990). Politically involved citizens tend to be the products of politically interested families. Such families, in which there is considerable political discussion, transmit not only political information but also a positive party identification and instill a sense of being politically effective. For adults, being politically informed, having a party identification, and feeling that one can have an impact on political affairs through one's own action all encourage participation in political life (Langton 1969; Dalhous and Frideres 1996; Valentino and Spears 1998; Settle et al. 2011).

Several non-traditional family structures and functions that are relevant to political socialization are becoming increasingly common. These include:

### *Single-Parent Households*

The proportion of single-parent households varies by race and class. Overall, one-parent families account for about 25 percent of families in the United States with children under age 18. Women account for 8 out of every 10 of these one-parent families (U.S. Census Bureau 2012).

While the cultural assumption probably is not as common as it once was, there remains the widespread belief that men are more interested in, informed about, and generally active in politics than are women. This



promotes the presupposition that within families, husbands rather than wives set the political tone, that is, establish party identification for the entire family, are the primary personal source of political information, and establish views on issues. There are data indicating that, though differences are slight, mothers rather than fathers tend to be more influential politically within the family (Thomas 1971; Niemi 1973). Nevertheless, children from households headed by a single mother are less likely to discuss current events, feel politically effective, or have a strong partisan self-identification or vote (Amato 2000; Flanagan 2004; Beck and Jennings 1991; Verba et al. 2005; Weisberg 1987).

### *Skipped-Generation Families*

Early research revealed that political socialization within the family is not simply a two-generation process. Rather, parents can act as “middle persons” obtaining their political agenda from their own parents and passing it on, albeit as modified by their personal political biographies, to the next generation (Beck and Jennings 1975; Kemp 2007). Data indicated that transmission of party identification is weakened from first-to-third generation by comparison. Additional research has also found that political as well as other social attitudes tend to diverge between generations as time passed (Bettencourt et al. 2011; Geurts et al. 2009; Shapiro 2004).

Few studies have considered how the socialization process would differ if parents as “middle persons” were absent. Today, about five million children are being raised by their grandparents (Vespa et al. 2012). Multi-generational bonds are becoming increasingly salient (Settles et al. 2009; Kemp 2007). When grandparents maintain a daily presence in their grandchildren’s lives, grandchildren are likely to acquire some enduring values and political beliefs from them (Coldberg-Glen et al. 1998). Political socialization in skipped-generation families merits further inquiry.

### *Biracial Families*

Race has long been a variable considered in political socialization research.<sup>6</sup> However, the question of how people with biracial identities are socialized politically has largely been overlooked. This is a significant oversight. Since the 1967 Supreme Court decision declaring that anti-miscegenation laws in all states are unconstitutional, marriage between spouses of a different race or ethnicity have vastly increased. In 2010, 8.4 percent of all US mar-

riages were interracial, up from 5.2 percent in 1980. In 2010, about 15 percent of all new marriages were between partners with different identities (Wang 2012).

Historically, biracial individuals have been forced to identify with only one background, usually the non-white identity (Brown 2001; Rockquemore et al. 2008). This structures their social experiences and forms their political perceptions (Chong and Kim 2006; Sidanius et al. 2000). However, one model of racial identity formation has proposed that biracial individuals have agency in how they choose to rely on their racial identification, and do not need to consistently rely on a racial group's attachment in determining their political choices. Rather, they make strategic decisions they perceive as advantageous in given political situations (Masuoka 2008). As in the case of skipped-generation families, political socialization in biracial families warrants additional study.

### *Families Providing Homeschooling*

The US Department of Education considers students homeschooled if their parents report them as being schooled at home instead of a public or private school for at least part of their education and if their part-time enrollment did not exceed 25 hours a week. Detailed statistics on the proportion of students being homeschooled are difficult to compile. States define and track enrollment differently. The Department of Education estimates that, in 2007, approximately 1.5 million households were providing homeschooling. This represents a 74 percent relative increase from the period 1999 to 2007. Reasons for choosing to homeschool include desire to give religious and moral instruction (36 percent), concern for the school environment, including safety, drugs, and peer pressure (21 percent), dissatisfaction with academic instruction (17 percent), and other factors such as family, finances, distance to school, children's health problems, or special needs (Aud and Hannes 2011).

Other studies of dissatisfaction with public education have identified factors ranging from questions about their efficiency and effectiveness (Hanushek 1998; Hoxby 2000) to ideological concerns. The latter have been expressed by both conservatives and liberals who saw public schools as growing larger, more bureaucratic, less responsive to parents, and less adaptive to individual and local variations (Carper 2000; Stevens 2001). Homeschooling that was common in early American history gave way to something that was hardly done at all as more and more Americans

embraced formal schools, to something that, since the 1970s, has re-emerged as a significant alternative to the public school (Gaither 2008).

Some studies indicate that homeschoolers tend to be socially and politically conservative (Collom and Mitchell 2005; Cai et al. 2002). Additional research suggests that there may be some movement away from the political right to the political center (Reich 2005). There remains a lack of empirical evidence on the effectiveness of homeschooling. Perhaps claims to the existence of such evidence “indicates the desire of advocates to further advance what is largely an ideological agenda of deregulation as an end in itself” (Lubinski et al. 2013).

Obviously, parents who have, at least to some extent, rejected public schooling for their children and choose to provide instruction themselves have considerable influence as agents of political socialization. Some of their instruction is likely to reflect an ideological perspective. Homeschooled children have less contact with teachers and peers whose social and political views might differ from those of their parents. As the homeschooling movement grows, there is increasing reason to understand its political consequences.

## SCHOOL

Much, if not most, early research focused on public schools. Such studies were largely abandoned with the paradigm shift from the persistence perspective to the lifetime openness view described in Chap. 1. “While in the 60s there was a tendency to concentrate research efforts on the impact of parents and schools, now voluntary associations gradually come more into focus in socialization research” (Hooghe 2004).

Failure to continue studying in schools has resulted in the lack of systematic understanding of how the content and practices of the political socialization they provide were transformed by the changing political environment and eras, and the consequences of reconstructed programs. Some of the central findings of the earlier research are briefly summarized below. They concern both the political perspectives they taught and the methods of instruction they used to convey these views.<sup>7</sup> This will provide a basis for developing some hypotheses concerning the sources and results of subsequent changes.

In most American primary and secondary schools studied by the initial researchers, there were some manifest and systematic programs for teaching specified political information, attitudes, and values. Some of the

political messages students encountered were components of these programs. Other political messages were latent and sometimes were transmitted in unintended ways. The findings reviewed below include messages of both types. Research revealed five important classes of messages. These concerned nationality, political authority, citizenship, democracy, and the facts of political life.

Studies showed that, while there is some subcultural variation, particularly among the very poor (Jaros et al. 1968; Lyons 1970) and among some minorities (Greenberg 1970; Orum and Cohen 1973; Campbell 1976; Abramson 1977), at a very early age, schools tended to develop a strong sense of national loyalty within the child—a feeling that being an American was better than belonging to any other nationality. In the early grades children develop a sense of “we” in relation to their own country and a sense of “they” with respect to the citizens of other countries. A national chauvinistic perspective provided children with a framework for understanding political events and symbols (Maddox and Handberg 1980).

A second often-reported finding was that in their early school years, most American children come to idealize established political authority. By the time children were seven or eight years old, they became aware that there was an authority outside the family that demanded some support, obedience, and respect. Initially, due to their cognitive limitations, children conceptualized this authority in terms of concrete persons such as the president and the policeman. Several studies reported that such figures typically were viewed as trustworthy, benevolent, and helpful.<sup>8</sup> Later, as children developed the capacity to deal with less easily understood structures such as Congress and the Supreme Court, and with abstract concepts such as government, they transferred to them some of the highly positive qualities they previously attributed to individual persons. They tended to agree with the blanket statement that “all our laws are fair” and tended to agree strongly that “what goes on in the government is all for the best” (Easton and Dennis 1965). As children grew older, they did become considerably less idealistic. Political figures were seen as less heroic and benevolent, and some inequalities in the law were understood (Jaros 1973; Jennings and Niemi 1974). Nevertheless, children tended to remain less politically cynical than their parents, however cynical that happened to be. Widespread adult political cynicism did not seem to have developed by eighth grade (Greenstein 1965).

A third uniformity revealed by research concerned school children’s understanding of citizenship. Good citizens were those who obeyed the

law, voted and paid their taxes. Interviews suggested that second- and third-grade children make little distinction between a good citizen and a good person (Hess and Torney 1967). Over the span of the elementary grades, the concept of citizenship became more clearly differentiated and was located chiefly in the realm of the political. By eighth grade, children tended to characterize good citizenship in terms of three attributes: general interest in public affairs, participating in the electoral process, and obedience to the law—in that order of importance (Jennings and Niemi 1974). Data indicated that schools usually had little concern with developing political competences, motivated dispositions, and personal responsibilities beyond the conventional goals that pupils should grow up to work, pay their taxes, obey the law, vote in elections, and concern themselves with individual and family matters rather than improving society for the common benefit (Stacey 1977).

A fourth set of findings concerned the level of factual political information which children acquired during the school years. Research has dealt with three areas of knowledge: knowledge about formal political structures, knowledge about contemporary government officials, and knowledge about basic political processes. In each of these areas, the level of student information was remarkably low. A very brief review of more-or-less random findings should serve to illustrate this point.

A 1965 national study of high school seniors showed that only half knew the length of the United States senator's term of office and only 39 percent knew the number of justices of the Supreme Court (Jennings and Niemi 1974). A 1976 national survey found that more than one-third of 13-year-olds could not identify the Senate on a multiple-choice examination as one of the two parts of Congress (U.S. Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare 1978). On a 15-item test dealing with highly prominent political figures, parties, and countries in the news, a 1981 national study found that only 15 percent of high school seniors answered at least 12 items correctly (Sigel and Hoskin 1981).

Students were found to know even less about some realities of the political process than they did about formal political structures and political figures (Torney 1970). For example, a study of the political knowledge of politics among ninth graders revealed that they tended to hold these erroneous beliefs about political affairs: (1) Politics has little or nothing to do with conflict resolution; (2) there is little or no relationship between socioeconomic status and political behavior; (3) most citizens are well informed about current events and interested and active in political affairs;

(4) there is little connection between sociocultural factors and the decisions of government policy makers (Patrick 1970).

The fifth major finding of the political orientations of school children concerned their appreciation of democratic values. Research did indicate that American public schools produced symbolic democrats—students who expressed some support of abstract values such as majority rule, the opportunity to participate, and the importance of the vote. However, schools seemed unable to convey much tolerance for or even comprehension of those who would criticize the political-economic system of the United States (Merelman 1971). Schools developed some abstract understanding of democracy, but did little by way of promoting its acceptance and support.

The methods by which schools transmitted their political messages were also studied. Several common practices were identified. First, there was an emphasis on affectively oriented unifying political symbols, and participation in patriotic rituals. Idealized views of political authorities, structures, and processes were given. Data indicated that such perspectives were related to low civic education cognitive scores and low democratic value support. Patriotism seems to have been fostered at the expense of such democratic values as the freedom to criticize the government, equal rights for all citizens, tolerance of diversity, and freedom of mass media (Torney et al. 1975). Political education in the American school, particularly during the early years, did not foster the growth and development of mature political thinking among children (Stacey 1977; Abraham 1983).

Second, teachers tended to avoid presentation of “controversial” subject matter. They refrained from classroom discussions of politics on grounds that the proper place for the expression of political opinion was away from the impressionable minds of children (Zeigler and Peak 1970). Reluctance to discuss debated issues and challenges to the prevailing political-economic order was likely to leave students less politically knowledgeable, less interested in politics, and more compliant (Harvey 1970). Students who had not been exposed to political controversy were likely to find it difficult to understand the purpose of political institutions because they had not been shown that different groups of adults can disagree about public policy. They tended to perceive adult society as monolithic and omniscient and consequently saw no reason for pressure groups, political practices, or institutions which serve as venues where conflicts could be resolved or adjudicated (Torney et al. 1975).

Third, presentations of “good citizenship” tended to emphasize the nonpolitical aspects of citizenship such as politeness and hard work, stressed loyalty and compliance as paramount political virtues, and, insofar as political participation was considered, emphasized its most passive forms such as keeping informed and voting. Researchers contended that failure to encourage an activist orientation to politics during the school years reduced the probability that future citizens would fully participate in democratic processes as adults (Sigel and Hoskin 1981; Beck and Jennings 1982).

Fourth, for at least four decades (1940–1980), reviews of social studies texts used in American primary and secondary schools showed that their treatment of the American political and economic systems offered little factual information and characteristically failed to distinguish empirically grounded claims from value elements (Zeigler and Peak 1970). A content analysis of the best-selling civics textbooks clearly documented their emphasis on obedience to rules and on learning the “right” facts and values and their failure to discuss the importance of critical thinking and protecting individual rights. Also, what students were not exposed to may have been as important as what they were exposed to. At all levels of instruction there was little real competition of ideas. For example, non-American sociopolitical systems and their ideologies were rarely, if ever, discussed (Marger 1981). In addition, schools often used materials provided by businesses and industries. While these may have served well as learning aids, they also served to promote corporate interests in maintaining existing political and economic structures (McConnell 1976).

Beyond the overt content of what was officially taught, teaching practices and the presentation of implicit role models were part of the process of political learning in American schools. For example, it was argued that social relations in schools corresponded closely to the social relations of dominance, subordination, and motivation in the economic sphere. In schools, individuals were induced to accept the degree of power they would face as adult workers and citizens (Bowles and Gintis 1976). As an example of implicit role models, it may be that gender differences were reified in school by the contradiction between the male/female stated role of the primary teacher as an authoritative representative to the child contrasted with the female teacher’s actual and practiced passive and submissive role vis-à-vis social structure (Grumet 1981).

From their very origin in the 1950s, studies of American schools showed that, with some variation by social and class composition, they

have promoted the development of basically acquiescent and allegiant future citizens. It has been suggested that schools have continued to play this role (Hess and Torney-Purta 2005).

Continuation of widespread transmission of a highly idealized vision of the contemporary United States would be remarkable. The past half century has seen racial unrest, protest against gender inequality, highly unpopular wars, periods of high unemployment, and the introduction of new information technologies that have significantly transformed citizen-government relations. Erosion of public trust of government over the past decades has been noted. However, this largely has been attributed to broad social factors such as changing citizen expectations rather than failures of government (Dalton 2005), a rapid rise in materialistic value orientations that occurred in American youth in the 1970s and 1980s (Rahn and Transue 1998), or, most generally, America's decline in social capital (Putnam 1995).

The political role presently being played by American schools is unclear. It would seem difficult to present the political world in the manner in which it was discussed decades ago—even if intended audiences are children. Newer emphasis on classroom discussions, particularly those focusing on controversial issues, some use of texts offering critical accounts of American history,<sup>9</sup> and the introduction of service learning activities may be preparing students to be more active and informed future citizens.<sup>10</sup> However questions remain. Do schools continue to instill a strong sense of national loyalty? Do children still idealize established political authority? How do they conceptualize “good citizenship” today? Compared to earlier findings, how much do they know about, and what do they believe about, formal political structures and processes? How have these results been produced and what are their consequences? There is much research to carry forward.

## RELIGION

Americans have mixed feelings about the appropriateness of clergy discussing candidates or issues from the pulpit (Kohut et al. 2000). Additionally, the 1954 Johnson Amendment of the Internal Revenue Code threatens loss of tax exempt status for churches conducting political campaign activities to intervene in election of public officials. This would seem to limit the impact of churches as agents of political socialization. However, religious organizations do take public stands on major social issues, as many did, with considerable influence, in the 1960s with respect to Civil Rights and the Vietnam War (Beyerlein and Hipp 2006).



The importance of religion as a source of political cleavage declined slightly from the turbulent 1960s until the 1980s (Brooks and Manza 1997). Then, the increasing prominence of a number of social issues, including prayer in the public schools, contraception, abortion, gay rights, stem cell research, and a variety of welfare state policies, prompted the political involvement of religiously committed and conservative Christians (Jelen 1991; Wilcox 1992).

Religious groups tend to display distinctive patterns of voting in US presidential elections. For example, in the elections of 2000 through 2012, on average, Protestants preferred the Republican candidate 57 to 42 percent, while Catholics voted 50 to 48 percent for Democrats, Jews supported Democrats 69 to 30 percent, while the religiously unaffiliated voted Democratic 70 to 26 percent.<sup>11</sup>

Religious groups often coincide with socioeconomic, ethnic, and racial groupings. This makes it difficult to determine the extent to which religion per se affects the political orientations of individuals. However, a landmark study and considerable subsequent work have supported belief in the existence of an independent “religious factor” (Lenski 1961).

An important example of the inquiry’s findings concerned support for welfare state activities for government and government regulation of the economy. In industrial societies, lower classes tend to support both functions. However, data indicated that middle-class Jews were more likely to express their view that government was doing too little than were working-class members of either white Protestant or Catholic groups. Further, they showed that an extremely low percentage of working-class white Protestants were favorably disposed to the idea of nationalizing basic industries. This idea found even less favor with them than it did with members of other religious groups who were predominantly middle-class. More recent studies showing that religious identities provide cognitive structures that influence political preferences also indicate the operation of a “religious factor” (Wilcox et al. 2008).

Research has identified several ways in which political socialization within their churches has affected present and future citizens.

### *Bestowing Legitimacy on the Political System*

One of the most fundamental social influences of religious organizations in the United States is that of bestowing legitimacy on the political system. In their early years, children tend to see their parents as the source of

immutable social rules. At some point, this view gives way to the realization that parents are themselves subject to rules not of their own making. The sources of such rules are vaguely understood to be religion and, to a lesser extent, politics. In fact, many children confuse religious and political authority. For example, young children's image of the president tends to be similar to images usually associated with God. Children have discussed the president as "about the best person in the World," as having absolute power over the nation, and as being personally interested in the needs of each individual citizen (Hess and Torney 1967). In addition, "there is some evidence that young children confuse religious ritual with patriotic observance. The similarity between hymns and national anthems, between flags and crosses, is obvious. Great sanctity can surround both realms" (Jaros 1973).

### *Providing Experience with Democratic Procedures*

Active participation in the life of a democratically structural church can lead to the acquisition of skills necessary for effective political participation. Such skills include how to organize and run meetings, write letters, and argue issues (Cohen and Rogers 1993; Djupe and Gilbert 2006; Verba et al. 1995). In turn, practicing such skills can demonstrate the importance of organizational participation in general and promote democratic values including attention to the public good, cooperation, respect for others, respect for the rule of law and willingness to participate in public life (Ayala 2000; Fung 2003).

### *Instilling Beliefs Influencing Political Participation*

Some categories of religious beliefs have been found to influence political participation. A seminal study differentiates micro and macro religious beliefs (Driskell et al. 2008). The former include convictions that are personal and focus on individual interests. Having the topics of one's prayers, their own finances, or their relationship with God, serve as examples. Macro beliefs involve more general concerns. Examples include belief in the importance of seeking social and economic justice in being a good person and praying for people one does not personally know. Findings indicate that while micro beliefs have no effect on national political participation, macro beliefs do. For example, those who believe God is directly involved in worldly affairs tend to have lower levels of participation in

national elections. The study concludes that “religion’s effect on political participation is tied to religious beliefs more than religious behavior” (309). However great their relative importance, religious ideas as well as organizational participation impact citizen political involvement.

### *Influencing Political Tolerance*

Research on the relationship of religion to political intolerance originated during the post-World War II era when anti-communism was at the core of American political culture.<sup>12</sup> Studies conducted from the 1950s through the 1990s consistently reported a direct relationship between religion and tolerance. Those who regularly attended church were found to be less willing than others to support civil liberties for those of whom they disapproved. Such groups included atheists, communists, socialists and homosexuals.<sup>13</sup>

More recent scholarship has questioned the presence of direct ties between religion and political intolerance. Numerous studies have concluded that present day American political culture supports liberal democratic tolerance “even though it may criticize some of its features as misguided or downright immoral” (Kraynak 2001).

Following a critical review of the research literature, a comparatively sophisticated study found no direct ties of religion to political intolerance (Einstein 2006). The religion measure included *religious commitment* (respondent’s frequency of church attendance, frequency of prayer, and assessment of how much guidance religion provided in their day-to-day living), and *doctrinal orthodoxy* (respondent’s belief that “The Bible is the actual word of God and is to be taken literally, word for word”). The political tolerance measure required respondents to identify their most disliked group from a list of “extremist” groups that included, among others, socialists, Ku Klux Klan, atheists, homosexuals, religious fundamentalists, and feminists, and then react to a series of statements about “a range of peaceful activities in which members of that group might participate or steps the government might take against that group.”

Data indicate that there is no *direct* negative effect of either religious commitment or doctrinal orthodoxy on political tolerance. However, each of the variables has an *indirect* negative influence. Doctrinal orthodoxy is linked to reduced political tolerance through threat perception (respondents’ belief that their “least liked” group has the potential to endanger important values or the social/constitutional order). In turn, increased

religious commitment leads to a decrease in a secure personality (willingness to consider ideas that are different from one's own)<sup>14</sup> and reduced self-esteem (Sniderman 1975).

### *Operating as a Status Group*

Religious groups are accorded different amounts of social honor and prestige. For example, in the United States, Catholics enjoy higher social status than Jews. This occurs in spite of the fact that Jews generally tend to be employed in more prestigious occupations, tend to have higher incomes and higher levels of education than Catholics. Religious groups are thus status groups whose relative positions are not entirely determined by the class composition of their membership. The social stratification of religious groups in America originated in the Colonial Period with regulations governing various religious groups access to scarce resources, such as the right to vote and hold public office as well as economic and political power based on religious adherence (Pyle and Davidson 2003).

Individuals often seek to enhance the standing of the status groups with which they identify. A status gain or loss for their group is a gain or a loss for them as well. The denial of equal honor and respect to a religious organization can be a source of discontent and a stimulus to political activity. When the occasions arise, the desire to enhance the status of one's religious group (and thus one's own status) can operate in this way (Levin 2004). This may account for such occurrences as heavy Catholic turnout at the polls in support of Catholic candidates, and on occasions when social policies of interest to the church, such as abortion, same-sex marriage, and stem cell research are voted on. The outcome of a referendum desired by one's church may have the same effect. Similarly, an attack on a coreligionist who holds public office may be seen as a status threat.

## WORKPLACE AND VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS

In the United States, few, if any, occupational roles are completely immune from the influence of political decisions. Licensing and certification requirements, minimum wage laws, child-labor laws, laws governing working hours and conditions all illustrate public policies affecting work. Government decisions to fund or discontinue funding various programs affect the employment or unemployment of millions. Government itself, at all levels, is a major employer.<sup>15</sup>

While almost every worker is affected in one way or another, those who believe that their occupational group is particularly influenced by political affairs are more likely than others to participate in routine politics.<sup>16</sup> Such persons are likely to be in occupations acquiring or facilitating the acquisition of politically relevant information and intellectual and social skills. Such skills include the ability to understand, interpret, and effectively communicate social, economic, and political information; the ability to formulate and express the political goals one desires as well as the possible means for their attainment; and some ability to work with others in both leadership and subordinate roles.

In general, high-status occupations such as most professions and executive and managerial positions require the education and later involve the performance of tasks which make likely the possession of such skills. Many manual and clerical jobs, on the other hand, have neither the educational requirements nor provide the experiences which are associated with their possession or development. This, in part, accounts for the fact that persons of higher occupational status are likely to participate in routine politics.<sup>17</sup>

The workplace is a context which offers greater opportunity for conversations with people having dissimilar political perspectives than do the family, school, or church. "Despite the notoriously weak nature of work-based social ties, evidence indicates that workplace-based exposure to differing politics increases people's knowledge of rationales for political perspectives other than their own and also fosters political tolerance" (Mutz and Mondak 2006).

The fact that a particular occupation neither requires nor develops skills that can be used in politics does not rule out their acquisition in voluntary associations formed by members of the occupation. These associations include not only formal organizations such as trade unions through which workers act collectively in their relations with employers and in their relations with the government. They also include informal, nonpolitical organizations such as social clubs, athletic teams, and lodges.

An early and frequently cited study of the International Typographical Union (ITU) by Lipset, Trow, and Coleman extensively analyzed the relationship between participation in these latter types of organizations and participation in union politics.<sup>18</sup> Their research, though dealing with intra-organizational politics, has long served as the basis for a general theory of the role of secondary association in the process of making political participants.

Findings indicated that nonpolitical associations within the ITU served as contexts within which new ideas on union politics were developed, served as communication centers in which people learned about and formed attitudes about politics, served as contexts in which political leaders could acquire training in the skills of politics, and served as contexts in which persons could attain the status necessary to become political leaders. In general, those who were active, whether formally or informally, in its occupational community—in its social clubs, veterans groups, benevolent associations, and so forth—were those who were politically involved and active in the union.

Voluntary associations need not be linked to workplaces in order to operate as agents of political socialization. Organizations performing social services for their communities serve as examples. Youth voluntary associations—those involving young people just before they transition into full citizenship—can play this role as well. Examples include student service organizations, student councils, drama clubs, National Honors Societies, and religious groups. Relevant activities in these groups include public speaking, debate, communal representation, and communal rituals. These, in turn, develop relationships, civic skills, knowledge, identities, and interest in politics that can have modest but lasting positive effects on adult political participation (McFarland and Thomas 2006).

## MEDIA

Families, schools, churches, workplaces, and voluntary associations are contexts in which political socialization occurs through direct interpersonal communication. In each of these settings, most of the conversation is top-down. Parents tell their children about their political beliefs and values, and provide personal models of political engagement. Teachers present their students with purportedly factual accounts of political history and current events as well as descriptions of the traditional norms of democratic politics. Clergy offer their followers views of political life, reflecting, to a greater or lesser extent, the politically relevant beliefs and values of their faith as well as concern for the interests of their church as a status group.

The media provide most of the material (accounts of history, news, and commentary) from which parents, teachers, clergy, co-workers, and so on construct the presentations of political reality which they deliver to their audiences. The media accounts themselves are symbolic construc-

tions reflecting organizations' choices of what to report, how this should be interpreted, and the language used in their narratives (Edelman 1988). Subsequently, the agents of political socialization impose their own understanding of the media material and present this to their audiences with the intent of having them accept their interpretations as veridical accounts of political reality.

Direct consumers of traditional mass media material (books, radio broadcasts, television, newspapers, and news magazines) occasionally question the accuracy of their reports. In recent years, coverage of the Iraq War, global warming, and provisions of the Affordable Care Act illustrates that such caution is warranted.

Misgiving about politically relevant media content is most often expressed as concern with "media bias." Here attention is focused not so much on factual accuracy as on media selection and interpretation of topics with the explicit intent of supporting an ideological perspective (Gans 2003).

Numerous writers, popular as well as academic, have argued that mainstream mass media work to cultivate a politically liberal citizenry.<sup>19</sup> Their research has focused on survey data reporting journalists' political beliefs, perspectives on social issues such as abortion, affirmative action, AIDS, the environment, gender, gun control, race, religious issues and welfare, and on their coverage of political parties and candidates. Explanations of the purported liberalism has focused on journalists' social origins, on their personal and prior communications to liberal politicians and to the high circulation rates of their work in markets where populations have been shown to hold liberal values.

Studies concluding that mainstream media transmit a conservative perspective emphasize the commercial nature of news organizations and the ties between media corporations and the government.<sup>20</sup> Content analyses offered in support of the argument illustrate the status quo supporting character of news items and reliance of "experts" who commonly represent corporate interests. Put most succinctly, the liberal argument contends that: "(The media's) major functions appear to support the system, to uphold conformity, to provide reassurance, and to protect the members of society from excessively disturbing, distracting, or dysfunctional information. The mass media are almost entirely commercial, profit-making institutions" (Qualter 1985).

The lively media bias debate, continuing from the 1970s to the present, expresses concern of political partisans that the traditional mainstream

mass media are used by their ideological opponents to shape citizens' understanding of the political world.<sup>21</sup> The debate itself generally sidesteps consideration of *how* media operate as agents of political socialization. Three alternative theories of media effects address this question (Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007).

The *agenda setting* model focuses on the strong correlation between the emphasis the media places on particular issues and the importance attributed to these issues by citizens (McCombs and Shaw 1972). A second approach, *priming*, emphasizes changes in the standards people use to evaluate political candidates and issues. It is an extension of *agenda setting*. By making some issue more salient in people's minds, media can also influence the considerations that people take into account when making political judgments (Iyengar and Kinder 1987). *Framing*, the third theoretical approach, refers to the process by which media impose cognitive frameworks for understanding political actors, conditions, and events (Goffman 1974). Ordinary language is instructive here, for people commonly refer to news items as *stories*. A number of stories can be told about any given political topic. The particular story that is told constitutes some of the basic material out of which audiences construct their own beliefs and attitudes toward the particular subject. Those involved in the media bias debate recognize the process and accuse the media of systematically presenting stories that promote the interests of their political adversaries.

The media bias debate focused on the political contents of the traditional news media: television, newspapers, news magazines, and radio. However, since the publication of most of the studies of the topic, there has been a steady decline in their use as sources of political information. This is particularly true among young people (Buckingham 1997). By 2004, the internet had emerged as "an essential part of American politics" (Rainie et al. 2005).

By 2013, television remained as America's main direct source of news. This was due, in part, to the popularity of two relatively new television networks: CNN and Fox. However, more than 20 percent of citizens now claimed that they relied primarily on sources such as websites, blogs, and social media (Saad 2013). Most citizens now use these to supplement their reliance on the traditional outlets.

While many people turn to the news media primarily to become more fully informed citizens, many others use them to provide material that supports their existing perspectives. For example, 79 percent of those who describe their views as conservative rely on Fox News as their main news



source while only 2 percent of those who describe themselves as liberal do so (Saad 2013). Countless websites offer ideological perspectives.<sup>22</sup> The proliferation of such news sources could lead to a better informed nation.<sup>23</sup> It could also contribute to the socialization of a citizenry that is more ideologically and politically polarized. Finally, the internet makes it much easier to (1) bypass parents, teachers, leaders, and authorities of various kinds and directly access political information; (2) communicate with limitless numbers of fellow citizens; and (3) communicate directly with political elites. This represents profound changes in the structure of political socialization (Chadwick 2006; Denton and Kuypers 2007; Gainous and Wagner 2011).

The politically relevant experiences of individuals within their families, schools, churches, workplaces, voluntary associations when using the media, vary by their gender, race, ethnicity, and social class. The following section considers the role of these social identities in the making of citizens.

## NOTES

1. For critiques of research failure to consider the interaction effects of the agents of political socialization, see Camino and Zeldin (2002), Dudley and Gitelson (2002).
2. Children raised in homes where they are encouraged to express opinions freely are more likely to attend to the media, form opinions, and take part in discussions than are those whose parents stress deference, social harmony, and discourage them for bringing up topics that might offend their elders (McLeod and Chaffee 1972).
3. Seldom are all things equal. The groups are likely to differ with respect to internal political homogeneity, the importance they attribute to politics, and their punishments, if any, for political nonconformity. In making a choice, the individual must take such additional factors into account.
4. See Chap. 1 footnote numbers 58, 59, and 75.
5. This may not be true of children who strongly identify with one parent but not with the other. The effectiveness of homogeneity is also altered according to whether they conform with the national majority or minority culture (Jennings and Niemi 1974).

6. For example, see Abramson (1977), Orum and Cohen (1973). The impact of race and ethnicity is discussed further in Chap. 5.
7. There was some relation between what was taught and the way in which it was taught (Tapper 1976; Torney et al. 1975).
8. See Hess and Easton (1960) and Sigel (1968). Not all presidents are equally regarded. During the incumbency of the popular presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy, children tended to acquire trusting attitudes toward the presidency; during the incumbency of the less popular Johnson and Nixon, children acquired less favorable attitudes (Sears and Valentino 1997).
9. For example, see Zinn (2003).
10. See Niemi and Junn (1998), Hess (2002), Walker (2002). There is also more recent evidence indicating that involving students in school-linked voluntary associations can have long-term positive results on adult political participation independent of social background characteristics (McFarland and Thomas 2006).
11. Computed from data (Pew Research Center 2012).
12. Seminal work was Stouffer (1955).
13. Corbett (1982), Erskine and Siegel (1975), Nunn et al. (1978), Sullivan et al. (1982).
14. See Rokeach (1960).
15. In 2012, the federal government alone had almost three million civilian employees.
16. Exceptions to this generalization occur in cases where members of an occupational category, such as teachers in public institutions, believe their political involvement may threaten their job status and security.
17. However, participation rates are higher for some occupations than what might be predicted by education level. These include farm owners, government employees, clerical and sales workers. See Conway (2000).
18. In Lipset et al. (1962), the authors noted the importance of distinguishing between a set of voluntary associations which is deliberately organized and controlled by central authority and a structure of voluntary associations independent of such control. The existence of independent voluntary associations is associated with a high level of routine political participation. However, the deliberately organized system is negatively linked to political democracy.
19. Examples include Bozell and Baker (1990), Bozell (2005), Coulter (2002), Goldberg (2002), Lichter et al. (1986), Rusher (1988).

20. Alterman (2008), Bagdikian (2000), Croteau and Hoynes (2001), Gans (1979), Lee and Solomon (1990), Tuchman (1978).
21. Our own empirical research, analyzing mainstream coverage of selected domestic issues over a 25-year period, found little evidence of any systematic bias. See Adkins Covert (2009).
22. Leading conservative sites include *The Drudge Report*, *The Daily Caller*, *The National Review Online*, *The Weekly Standard* and *The Cato Institute*. Liberal counterparts include *Slate*, *Politico*, *The Huffington Post*, *The Daily Beast* and *The Nation*.
23. There is some evidence of a stronger relationship between online news consumption and political knowledge than traditional media consumption and political knowledge. See Mossberger et al. (2008).

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PART II

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Social Identities and Political  
Socialization

## Gender

Decades of research have consistently shown that women have lower levels of political interest (Bennett and Bennett 1989), political knowledge (Verba et al. 1997), sense of political efficacy (Hansen 1997), and with the exception of voting, lower rates of political participation in general (Bennett and Bennett 1989; Delli Carpini et al. 1996; Verba et al. 1997). Women also talk less about politics, are less likely to attempt to persuade others to vote for their candidate (Atkeson and Rapoport 2003), and are less effective than men when they do attempt to persuade (Morehouse Mendez and Osborn 2010). Women are also less likely to run for political office and are evaluated as less competent than their male opponents when they do run (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993). While many of the differences in the social orientations of men and women are reflections of differences in the social positions and experiences into which they have been channeled, these particular patterns have remained even in the face of significant changes in the work, family, social, and political lives of women in the United States.

This chapter begins with a review of the existing research on the political impact of gender. It then moves to a discussion of the ways in which the various socializing agents differentially affect the political socialization of men and women. The chapter concludes with an examination of how the life cycle mitigates the impacts of both gender and these socializing agents, and considers some recent trends and predictions about the future.

## POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

A variety of explanations have been posited for women's comparative lack of political participation (Atkeson and Rapoport 2003). Two theoretical models dominate the discussion: gender socialization and political resource theory. Socialization models emphasize the early lessons males and females receive about their role within the political sphere that are subsequently reinforced in adulthood (Atkeson and Rapoport 2003; Atkeson 2003; Mayer and Schmidt 2004). Given that females see relatively few historical or contemporary role models in politics, the message is still that politics is largely "a man's game" (Dolan 2011). Political issues and elections are often framed within the language of sports and war, two other male-dominated spheres. In addition to dissuading women from political participation in general, dominant gender ideologies continue to define political activities as belonging to the public sphere and therefore to men, while defining women's traditional domain of the home and family as private (Sapiro 1983).

Political resource theory argues that women's lower participation is due to a lack of political capital compared to that of men. "Political resources include both situational and structural factors that differ between men and women, including education, income, and whether or not one is employed outside the home" (Atkeson and Rapoport 2003). Gender roles and gender socialization play a role in the accumulation and utilization of political capital. Dominant gender ideologies about women's roles mean that women continue to shoulder a disproportionate share of child care and domestic work. The gendered responsibilities of home and family, then, provide women with less time to participate in politics (Welch 1977; Elder 2004). Education is another critical source of political capital. While women currently outnumber men in obtaining undergraduate and graduate degrees, women have historically had lower access to higher education than men. Finally, women garner fewer economic resources in that they are overwhelmingly employed in lower paying and lower prestige sectors of the economy, are less likely to be employed full-time, and are overrepresented among the poor. On most of these measures, women accumulate and possess fewer political resources than their male counterparts. This model argues that it is not gender per se, but a lack of social and political resources accumulated by women, which results in differential participation in politics. Because of this, political resource theory has applications beyond gender for the examination of participation among other groups

who lack political resources, including racial and ethnic minorities and the poor (Verba et al. 1993).

Both of these models contribute to our understanding of the gender gap in political participation. It is gender role socialization, both in general and with respect to politics, and the reality of women's historical and enduring economic, social, and political disadvantages which contribute to the creation and perpetuation of this gap. The interaction effects of political resources and social identities are evident in several studies examining the gender gap in participation (Welch 1977; Ondercin and Jones-White 2011; Schlozman et al. 1999). Researchers find that controlling for economic, educational, employment, and other social factors tends to significantly diminish the gender gap in participation (Welch 1977; Ondercin and Jones-White 2011; Stolle and Hooghe 2011). At higher levels of political knowledge, women also had higher rates of participation than men for a variety of conventional types of political activities (Ondercin and Jones-White 2011).

One trajectory of research examining this gap has been to redefine what is considered political participation to include activities more likely to be done by women. Most studies on gender differences in political participation tend to define participation within a narrow range of "conventional" activities. Conventional forms of political participation (voting, participating in campaign activities for candidates, making individual contributions to candidates, contacting public officials, discussing politics with friends, and running for office) are traditionally male-dominated activities (Norris 2002). These activities require higher levels of social capital in areas that men have traditionally surpassed women. Focusing on these conventional modes of participation tends to elevate the forms of participation where women are disadvantaged due to "disparities in resources, political attitudes and gender roles" (Coffé and Bolzendahl 2010).

Non-institutional forms of participation, including involvement in social movements and protests are somewhat less gendered (Karp and Banducci 2008; Mayer and Schmidt 2004). Research on activists from the 1960s finds that gender differences in participation and activism diminished when other factors such as social class, religiosity, and efficacy were included (Sherkat and Blocker 1994). While gender was found to be an important factor in participation in Freedom Summer demonstrations, the participation gap was more affected by prevailing gender ideologies and organizational biases against women than interest or motivation to participate (McAdam 1992). International data collected for the Comparative

Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) from 35 nations indicated that the gender gap in participation in demonstrations, marches, and protests was not statistically significant, with 10.6 percent of men and 8.7 percent of women reporting participation in at least one of these activities (Karp and Banducci 2008). This gap was significantly smaller than for other forms of political engagement, such as contacting officials or attempting to persuade others about an issue, candidate, or vote. This study also indicates that gender may be a less important factor in the United States in political engagement than in many other nations included in the data set. The relatively low levels of participation for women in conventional activities misses the potential that other forms of participation have provided entry for women into politics (Marien et al. 2010). This potential exists because “non-institutionalised participation takes part outside political institutions, beyond party politics, and it is less dominated by men and is often not even labelled as political by its participants” (2010).

Research using more inclusive definitions of political participation which include volunteerism and other forms of civic engagement, does indicate that females are more politically engaged than when more restrictive definitions are used (Cicognani et al. 2012). While women report lower levels of party membership, collective activism, and political contact activism, they engage in higher levels of “private activism,” which include actions such as signing petitions, boycotting products, and donating funds (Coffé and Bolzendahl 2010). With regard to donations to particular candidates or political parties, there is evidence that women’s financial contributions to campaigns have increased over the last several decades (Francia 2003). This has been significantly affected by the availability of “bundling” donor organizations such as EMILY’S List (Crespin and Deitz 2009). A movement away from traditional and gendered definitions of political involvement may remove many of the long-held notions about women’s lack of political interest, participation, and knowledge. Redefining political participation to include activities such as those discussed above changes our understanding of the widely held conception of the size and scope of a gender gap (Marien et al. 2010).

Women are also more likely to be involved in volunteer work (Einolf 2011; Bureau of Labor Statistics 2009). While men have higher levels of political participation, women are more likely to do non-political voluntary work and spend more time volunteering than men (Wilson 2000). Men and women also engage in different types of voluntary work. Women are more likely to take on “direct care” activities than men and are less



likely to hold leadership positions (De Piccoli and Rollero 2010; Wilson 2000). In addition, men's volunteerism is more likely to be connected to their employment (Musick and Wilson 2008). Some scholars critique the literature which discounts voluntary activities as non-political. Many ways in which women have traditionally participated (in parent associations or within churches, for example), "intersects with politics in many ways" and involve skills that are transferrable to political participation (Schlozman et al. 1994). For women who volunteer, their motivations may be connected to their mother's modeling behavior (Mustillo et al. 2004). In addition, mothers who volunteer recruit their daughters into volunteerism (Gidengil et al. 2010).

Perhaps the most visible forms of political participation are running for and holding political office. In the United States, women continue to lag behind men in running for and holding elected and appointed political positions at the local, state, and national levels. A number of factors have been identified for women's continued underrepresentation among candidates and officeholders, including gender role socialization, family obligations, lower levels of confidence about their political knowledge, and a lack of role models (Elder 2004). While both genders agree that more women should run for office, women are more likely to underestimate their political knowledge and to indicate that family responsibilities would inhibit their ability to have a political career (Elder 2004). These findings reinforce both models discussed at the beginning of this chapter by illustrating the dual impact of political socialization and inequality in political resource acquisition on women's lower levels of political participation (Welch 1977).

### DIFFERENCES IN POLITICAL INTEREST

Women consistently report lower rates of interest in nearly all areas of politics (Hooghe and Stolle 2004; Bennet and Bennett 1989). While political interest is often conflated with political engagement and political participation, the relationships among these three concepts are far from perfect. While women have higher rates of voter turnout, they are less likely to report that they are "very interested" in politics than are men. There is a common assumption that "women participate less intensively because of an innately reduced interest in politics" (Hooghe and Stolle 2004). An alternative explanation is that women's participation is inhibited by both external and internal forces (Verba et al. 1978). While external limitations such as laws prohibiting women from voting or holding office are largely

absent worldwide, the internal limitations, noted earlier, remain (Bennett and Bennett 1989; Greenstein 1969; Conway 1985). Even before marriage and childrearing, the effects of gender socialization can be measured as early as adolescence, where females show significantly different attitudes toward politics than do males (Fridkin and Kenney 2007; Mayer and Schmidt 2004; Cicognani et al. 2012).

Men and women also appear to be interested in different political issues. Men report higher levels of interest in politics more generally with the greatest difference for foreign policy issues, where women's interest was lowest. Levels of interest in local politics are very similar between men and women (Verba et al. 1997). In addition, women have been found to have higher interest in local government than national and international politics (Hayes and Bean 1993). Recent findings point to women's role within the family and its impact on gender differences in interest toward political issues such as education and social welfare programs, especially during childbearing and childrearing years. For British women, interest in particular political issues, rather than in politics generally, may also be related to the life cycle (Campbell and Winters 2008). Women's political interest was most similar to men's in the 55 to 64 years age group, when childrearing is complete or near completion. This lends support to the notion that gender-based family responsibilities throughout the life cycle shape the strength and direction of political interest for women in different ways than for men. In this area, definitions about what issues are deemed "political issues" may also be important, further casting doubt on literature regarding the existing gap between men and women's interest in politics and party identification (Burden 2008). When broader definitions are used to include local issues and social welfare issues such as health care and education, women's interest levels increase (Campbell and Winters 2008).

Women's interest in politics also varies depending on the election cycle and the slate of candidates. The presence of female candidates can play a role in both increased interest for specific races as well as general political interest levels for women, particularly if that candidate is perceived as a viable contender (Verba et al. 1997; Atkeson 2003; Campbell and Wolbrecht 2006). The impact of female candidates on the ballot is uneven, however (Wolak 2014). First, the political party of the female candidates is important (Reingold and Harrell 2010). Female candidates from a female voter's own political party have a greater impact on women's engagement than those from an opposing party (288). Second, while more female candidates have a positive effect, it is not sufficient to predict women's interest

and engagement more generally (Koch 1997; Wolak 2014). The 1992 election cycle was christened “The Year of the Woman” because of the relatively large number of female candidates running for US Congressional offices. There was also more public attention given to issues believed to be important to female voters, due in part to this increase in the number of females on the ballot (Atkeson 2003). But this shift was short lived as the following election cycles failed to maintain this momentum and interest and activity among female voters returned to pre-1992 levels. The presence of more female candidates in 1992 also impacted men’s interest in politics. While associated with an increase in interest among women, it resulted in a slight decrease in interest among men.<sup>1</sup>

### DIFFERENCES IN KNOWLEDGE

There is also a significant and resilient gap between men and women’s political knowledge (Verba et al. 1997; Delli Carpini and Keeter 2005). While it is clear that men consistently score higher on a variety of knowledge-based tests about political issues, less attention has been given to explaining the disparity than reporting it. Researchers examining the “knowledge gap” between male and female voters have found that the gap is likely smaller than conventional wisdom would lead us to believe (Mondak and Anderson 2004). Critics of earlier studies distinguish between perceptions of political knowledge, confidence in one’s political knowledge, and measurable differences in knowledge (Elder 2004).

For example, there is consistent tendency for women to provide higher rates of “don’t know” responses to questions about parties and candidates (Atkeson and Rapoport 2003; Shapiro and Mahajan 1986; Kellstedt et al. 1988). One possible explanation is that rather than a genuine gap in knowledge, women are simply less confident about their political knowledge due to socialization. “When men aren’t sure about an answer they are more likely to guess and, in the process, to gain the advantage from a scoring system that doesn’t penalize wrong answers and rewards right ones” (Kenski and Jamieson 2000). When “don’t know” questions are replaced with random guesses, half of the knowledge gap between male and female respondents disappears (Mondak and Anderson 2004). The perceived gap, then, may be more a reflection of gender socialization than actual differences in knowledge.

Other research has measured “political efficacy” levels in men and women and found that while only 25 percent of women, compared to

39 percent of men, scored high in the assessments of their knowledge base, these differences are not the same as actual differences in political knowledge as measured by asking about current candidates, office holders, and political issues (Hansen 1997). Women may be less confident about their political knowledge due to gender socialization that defines politics and the political sphere as a “masculine” domain (Atkeson and Rapoport 2003). Data from the National Civics Awareness tests administered in American schools indicate that girls either scored on par with boys or outscored boys in political knowledge at the fourth and eighth grade levels, but lagged behind boys in the twelfth grade (Bardes and Oldendick 2012). Adolescence, then, may be an important time period for improving young women’s confidence in their political knowledge in order to narrow this gap.

A number of additional factors influence the size of the gender gap in political knowledge and efficacy. These include employment, marriage, and childrearing. Women’s employment is a key element in the gender knowledge disparity (Dow 2009). As discussed in Chap. 3, the workplace provides opportunities to discuss political issues and acquire political knowledge. In addition, many occupations are connected to politics, making political knowledge particularly relevant to those in certain professions. Gender differences in men’s and women’s occupational experience reduce women’s access to this source of political knowledge (121). While marriage has been shown to increase political knowledge for both men and women (Verba et al. 1997), the demands of parenthood affect men and women differently. The presence of children reduces women’s opportunities to gather political knowledge and participate in the political sphere (Dow 2009). Data show that “marriage, number of children, working hours, group membership, and education have gender-specific implications for the acquisition of political knowledge” (2009). The fact that these patterns have remained in the face of significant changes in women’s family, education, and work experiences over the last three decades suggests that other factors are at play for the continued disparity in knowledge such as the historical exclusion of women from the political sphere and gender role socialization (Delli Carpini and Keeter 2005).

Further, the measures used to assess political knowledge may themselves be gendered (Dolan 2011; Coffé 2013; Delli Carpini and Keeter 2005; Verba et al. 1997; Stolle and Gidengil 2010). “Most commonly used measures of political knowledge are constructed from standard items that ask people to identify (mostly male) national and international

political leaders and to answer questions about functions of the branches of the national government” (Dolan 2011). Redefining knowledge beyond these items significantly alters the knowledge gap. Men and women score similarly on items regarding local issues and office holders (Coffé 2013; Delli Carpini and Keeter 2005; Verba et al. 1997). In addition, the gender gap disappears on issues of health care, education, abortion, and other traditionally female “gendered issues” (Delli Carpini and Keeter 2005; Dolan 2011). One response to these critiques is to distinguish between what can be termed “conventional” and “practical” political knowledge (Stolle and Gidengil 2010). Existing research on “conventional” political knowledge focuses on the electoral and legislative processes rather than on issues which affect the everyday lives of citizens. “Practical” knowledge is defined in terms of knowledge about government services and benefits such as legal aid, health screenings, and child tax credits (96). An underlying assumption of this critique is that women, because of their roles within the family, will have greater need to know about the availability of government services than men and therefore the gender gap should be smaller for these questions. Findings support this argument: women scored higher on nearly all of the practical knowledge items.

The presence of female candidates is also associated with increased political knowledge, efficacy, and engagement among female voters (Atkeson 2003; Burns et al. 2001; Koch 1997; Hooghe et al. 2006; Dolan 2011). This effect is dependent, however, on the perceived viability of those female candidates in elections (Atkeson 2003).

The inclusion of questions about female representation in political offices also erases much of the gender gap in political knowledge (Hooghe et al. 2006). However, having female political representation does not seem to impact female voter turnout (Brookman 2014).

## COMMUNICATION AND PERSUASION

Two measures are generally used to assess rates of political communication: talking about political issues or candidates, and trying to influence the opinions or voting choices of others. Researchers find that men communicate about political issues more often than do women (Stolte Heiskanen and Veronica 1971; Yum and Kendall 1995), and are far more likely to attempt to persuade others regarding political issues and candidates (Atkeson and Rapoport 2003). Findings also indicate that men talk to more people about politics than do women (Yum and Kendall 1995). Men

and women also differ in whom they speak with about political issues. Women name their husbands as their primary political discussants, while men identify friends and co-workers. Occupational status, then, may be an important factor. While women are employed in the labor force in higher numbers than ever before, their labor force participation still lags behind that of men. Women are also more likely to be employed in occupations such those within the service sector that may provide fewer workplace opportunities to discuss political issues with co-workers.

The presence of female candidates can also affect women's attempts to talk about politics and to influence others regarding voting (Hansen 1997). In 1992, the "Year of the Woman," women were more engaged/active in the political sphere—both in terms of an increase in the number of female candidates for both state and national elections and in terms of active engagement in the political process for female voters/citizens. The presence of multiple female candidates also increases the likelihood that women try to influence others in their voting.

As noted earlier, what constitutes a "political" issue may be gendered. Traditional political issues such as voting, elections, political conflicts, and so on may be seen as more masculine issues. When "female" issues are included in the definition, we find that women talk politics at frequencies similar to men. A study of American and Canadian citizens found that gender is a significant factor in identifying an issue as political, where "on average, women hold less expansive conceptualizations, resulting in a narrower repertoire of relevant topics in which to take interest or to discuss" (Fitzgerald 2013). Given that men and women define politics and what constitutes a political issue in different ways, existing research findings on gender differences in political talk and political behavior may need to be reassessed.

Gender also plays a role in how knowledgeable a person is perceived to be about political issues and how successful a person is in their efforts to persuade others (Hansen 1997; Ryan 2010). Both males and females perceive female discussants as being less knowledgeable and male discussants as more knowledgeable than their true objective knowledge score (Morehouse Mendez and Osborn 2010). Among married couples, "women think their husbands are political experts. Men do not feel the same way about their wives" (Ryan 2010). Both males and females also report that they are less influenced by females than males in political discussions (Morehouse Mendez and Osborn 2010). Men are assumed to know more about politics and are therefore more successful in influencing others. Women are less assertive politically,

are less confident about their knowledge, and are assumed to be less knowledgeable. They are therefore less successful at influencing others on political issues. Perception of knowledge also affects the frequency of political discussion. Women are less likely to be “chosen” for discussion about politics as they are assumed to be less knowledgeable. Given that conversations about politics are a vital source for knowledge acquisition, women continue to be at a disadvantage in both acquiring political knowledge and in political persuasion (Conover et al. 2001).

### DIFFERENCES IN POLITICAL VIEWS

Research has repeatedly found that men and women diverge in their views on a variety of political issues. Women are more likely to support Democratic candidates and are generally more liberal in their views on most issues (Atkeson 2003). Women consistently have lower rates of support for capital punishment (Whitehead and Blankenship 2000), defense funding (Shapiro and Mahajan 1986), and engagement in military actions (Brooks and Valentino 2011; Fite et al. 1990; Shapiro and Mahajan 1986), and greater support for social welfare programs (Manza and Brooks 1998), abortion rights (Killian and Wilcox 2008; Norrander and Wilcox 2008), and environmental protection (Schumaker and Burns 1988; Zelezny et al. 2000).

Psychological explanations for the consistent gender gap in political ideology emphasize “female morality” and empathy particularly within the context of women’s role as primary caregiver, leading women to be more liberal on issues that affect children and families (Chodorow 1978; McCue and Gopoian 2000; Shapiro and Mahajan 1986; Eagly et al. 2004). Shifts in both the stated and implied positions of the Democratic and Republican parties with regard to social and cultural issues, such as equal rights for gays and lesbians (Peterson and Donenwerth 1998; Herek 2002; Eagly et al. 2004) and abortion (Gilens 1988) have also contributed to the growth and persistence of this gap (Kaufmann 2002). The gender gap in partisanship, from this perspective, reflects the divergence of men and women’s attitudes about social and cultural issues, as well as the relative importance of specific social and cultural issues for men and women in determining party preferences (Kaufmann and Petrocik 1999; Norrander and Wilcox 2008).

Sociological explanations emphasize gender role socialization as well as women’s lower socioeconomic status in relation to men’s in accounting for

women's greater support for social welfare and other anti-poverty programs (Eric and Rein 1988; Gilens 1988; Wilcox 1990; Kathlene 1989). The disproportionate impact of economic and cultural shifts, such as the rise of female-headed households, both from rising divorce rates and out-of-wedlock births, economic stagnation, and women's increased participation in the labor force, make social welfare and economic assistance programs and policies more salient for women than for men (Box-Steffensmeier et al. 2004). These shifts have resulted in greater support among women for Democratic candidates and for more liberal-leaning equal pay, public assistance, and family-friendly workplace politics (Manza and Brooks 1998). Research has found support for both of these views (Howell and Day 2000). A third explanation emphasizes the growth of feminist ideologies among some women, finding that women who do not identify as feminists hold views that are more similar to men overall than to women who do adopt a feminist identity (Conover 1988; Cook 1993; Cook and Wilcox 1991).

Other studies have questioned the size and even the presence of the gender gap in partisanship (Burden 2008; Kaufmann and Petrocik 1999; Wirls 1986; Trevor 1999). Researchers criticize the media for overemphasizing the percentage of women who identify as Democrats rather than focusing on the percentage of men identifying as Republican (Burden 2008; Kaufmann and Petrocik 1999; Wirls 1986). In the 1990s, fewer men and women came to identify as Democratic, although the greater decline was found among men (Trevor 1999). To further complicate matters, language has been found to affect women's stated affiliation: when questions regarding affiliation use "feeling" language rather than "thinking" language, the partisan gap disappears for women as more women associate with the Republican Party when asked which party they "feel" rather than "think" best reflects their views on particular issues (Burden 2008). The social expectation that women hold more liberal views may explain the shift in responses between the two sets of question wordings.

Taken together, the literature outlined above finds persistent differences between men and women in terms of political interest, political knowledge, and political engagement. It also reveals ways in which the gender gap is narrowing or disappearing, often connected to larger structural, cultural, and economic changes that have affected women's roles within the home, the workplace, and beyond. There is also evidence that political socialization is becoming less gendered. Males and females are being socialized more similarly now than in the past with regard to



politics (Trevor 1999). Studies find that girls value participation in politics more than boys do, although interest still lags slightly (Mayer and Schmidt 2004). The potential of this change for future generations of women with regard to political engagement is striking. Family, school, church, and mass media can intensify or mitigate gender effects. The following section examines existing research on these socializing agents.

## FAMILY

Early research on the role of family in political socialization focused on how the political interest and participation levels of fathers influenced their sons. Over time, researchers began to look at whether this pattern of father-to-son influence also held true for daughters. While some results show some of the same influences (i.e. more interest and activity from fathers predicted more interest and activity for daughters and vice versa), this relationship is weaker than with sons. Drawing on the father-son model of parental influence, researchers began looking at whether a mother-daughter influence was also present. The argument for focusing on this link draws from both Freudian psychology (Chodorow 1978), emphasizing same-sex identity modeling, and gender role socialization (Gilligan 1982). The assumption is that daughters identify more closely with their mothers and will be impacted more strongly by her pattern of political engagement and participation (Hess and Torney 1968). There is some evidence that a mother's political interest has more influence on daughters than sons and that daughters are more heavily influenced by their mothers than their fathers, but this is far from settled in the literature (Beck and Kent Jennings 1991). In research on political knowledge and efficacy, females with mothers who are perceived as very interested in politics have political communication scores similar to males and are less likely to give "don't know" responses on political knowledge tests (Atkeson and Rapoport 2003). Additionally, political activity of the mother outweighs the father's political activity in affecting a daughter's political engagement (Gidengil et al. 2010).

Given that women have historically been constrained in the extent and variety of political activities available to them, it is less likely that daughters would have mothers with high levels of political engagement. Research in this area consistently finds a much smaller percentage of mothers reporting as politically active compared to fathers. This results in data that often draw from outliers (studies of very active mothers and very active daugh-

ters) and therefore produce findings that are difficult to generalize. There does, however, seem to be support for a broader “learning by example” argument where higher levels of political interest and activity from parents are associated with higher levels of interest and activity in their children, regardless of gender (Warren and Wicks 2011). In the United States, engaging in political discussions with mothers and fathers is found to be equally important for predicting the levels of political interest in both sons and daughters (Mayer and Schmidt 2004).

Research focused on mother-to-daughter influences finds that politically active/engaged mothers are associated with daughters who have higher rates of political participation, volunteerism (Mustillo et al. 2004), higher levels of engagement (Gidengil et al. 2010), higher self-efficacy about one’s political knowledge (350), and stronger convictions (measured by comments and reduced “don’t know” responses) about political issues (Atkeson and Rapoport 2003). Additionally, there is evidence that younger women have higher levels of political participation than previous cohorts. It is therefore likely that future generations of daughters will report even higher levels of engagement for their own mothers.

Parents also play a role in shaping political attitudes and in recruiting their children into political parties (Cross and Young 2008). However, there is a high level of party “defection” among college students from the party of their parents, particularly for students with parents who identified as Republican (Abramowitz 1983). There are also gender differences in the intergenerational transmission of party identification and political attitudes, including evidence of greater intergenerational congruence for daughters with regard to both partisanship and value orientations, with mothers providing greater influence. Daughters are also less likely than sons to hold divergent political attitudes from those of their parents (Dalhousie and Frideres 1996) and have more similar value orientations with their parents, especially their mothers (Schmid 2012).

While parent-to-child socialization dominates the literature on the family’s role in political socialization, there are other models for family influence. First, as previously noted, some research has countered the prevailing assumption that influence goes in only one direction (i.e. from parent to child) (McDevitt and Chaffee 2002). As children approach adulthood, their knowledge and experiences can influence the political positions or levels of political engagement of their parents. In addition, there is evidence that among immigrant families, children play a crucial role in the political socialization of their parents (Bloemraad and Trost 2008). A sec-

ond trajectory of research has focused on sibling impact. Drawing on birth order theory, older siblings are viewed as more influential on political orientations than younger siblings. Within the context of political ideology, particular attention has been paid to the gender of the next-older sibling (Urbatsch 2011). Having a female next-older sibling increases the likelihood that a respondent supports the female position on issues where a gender gap is present. The reverse was also found: respondents whose next older sibling was male held more traditionally “masculine” positions on a set of social and policy issues.

In addition to being a central location for the development of a child’s racial, class, and gender identities, the family, then, is clearly a central location for the development of a child’s political identity (Gordon 2004). There continues to be strong evidence of intergenerational consistency with regard to both political orientation and political values. Rejection of the political values and party identification of their parents tend to occur most often during periods of political, economic, or social upheaval. Further, politically active and engaged parents produce politically active and engaged children. The research reinforces the critical role of the family in political socialization for both sons and daughters.

## SCHOOL

At the most basic level, education positively impacts political engagement for both males and females. Higher levels of education are associated with higher levels of political engagement and greater support for pro-democratic values (Nie et al. 1996). College attendance is correlated with higher levels of conventional and non-conventional political participation for both males and females (Sherkat and Blocker 1994; Solt 2008). Data indicate that: “University-educated women are more likely to vote, to belong to a political party, and to engage in political activities outside the traditional political arenas. They are also much more interested in politics and, not surprisingly, they are significantly better informed” (Gidengil et al. 2010).

In the United States, male and female youth indicate very similar levels of political interest and anticipated levels of participation. Girls identify more political activities that they might participate in than boys (Hooghe and Stolle 2004). These include both traditional forms of participation (voting, participating in a campaign, donating money) as well as a “number of social-movement-orientated activities such as volunteering,

collecting money, and collecting signatures” (Gidengil et al. 2010). It was this second group of activities that was found to appeal more to the girls. These results mirror those examining participatory differences between adult men and women presented earlier in this chapter.

American public schools appear to be successful in transmitting general values of “good citizenship,” such as patriotism, obedience to law, and the importance of political participation (Wasburn 1986). The traditional civics curriculum is less successful, however, in transmitting factual information about government office holders and political processes. Knowledge about current political leaders and of the foundations and functioning of American government is consistently low among junior high and high school students (Galston 2001).<sup>2</sup>

The type of school students attend, the content of civic education curriculum, and the in-school and extra-curricular experiences available to students have also been shown to be significantly associated with political engagement and participation (Cicognani et al. 2012; Youniss et al. 1997). Students attending lycee (college preparatory) schools in Italy reported higher levels of interest and higher levels of anticipated participation in “social, civic, and political” activities than those attending technical or vocational secondary schools (Cicognani et al. 2012). Similarly, specialized civics programs, such as those which emphasize both an understanding of political processes and the application of this knowledge to address community-based issues and concerns as well as those which incorporate open discussion and debates on political and social issues in the classroom, are associated with higher levels of measured political knowledge and anticipated political and civic participation (Pasek et al. 2008; Feldman et al. 2007; Campbell 2008).

Studies of gender differences with regard to the role of schools in political socialization have produced contradictory findings. While adult women are less likely to be politically engaged than their male counterparts, data show less consistent patterns regarding male and female youth (Hooghe and Stolle 2004; Mayer and Schmidt 2004). Recent studies find roughly equal or slightly higher levels of political interest among high school females than their male counterparts, but both males and females continue to identify politics as a largely male domain (Mayer and Schmidt 2004). While anticipated participation is a strong predictor of actual participation, the absence of large gender differences among male and female youth seems to indicate that schools are not a strong contributor to a gendered view of politics and political participation. Given that women’s

political knowledge scores and engagement levels lag behind men's in adulthood, we must look beyond the schools to explain the maintenance of these gender differences.

### VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS

Beyond one's connection within the family and lessons learned in schools, participation in voluntary associations can foster the development of an ideology of civic engagement (Putnam 2000). Associations organized around occupations, shared interests and goals, and hobbies and recreational activities play a critical role. Occupationally based associations such as trade unions and professional organizations have been particularly influential with regard to political socialization. Union membership, for example, is associated with higher levels of voting (Leighley and Nagler 2007). Women's lower labor force participation has limited their access to unions, one of the most influential voluntary associations with regard to political engagement. In addition, they are less likely to be involved in directly political organizations such as political parties (Harell 2009; Verba et al. 1995; Inglehart and Norris 2003; Young and Cross 2003). More generally, women's associational involvement is similar to that of men, with women more likely to participate in non-political than political voluntary actions (Harell 2009; De Piccoli and Rollero 2010). As discussed previously, however, many ostensibly "non-political" associations address issues with potentially political outcomes and foster skills transferrable to the political sphere (Schlozman et al. 1994).

### CHURCH

Even with declines in membership and attendance over the last few decades, religious institutions and organizations continue to play a crucial role in American society (Brenner 2011; Hadaway and Marler 2005).<sup>3</sup> Church membership is positively associated with political interest and electoral participation. As an agent of socialization, churches both reinforce values regarding civic participation and are a location for the political mobilization of members (Burns et al. 2001; Solt 2008). This may be particularly important for women, as research on religious participation and engagement consistently finds that women have higher rates of church membership and attendance, stronger religious commitment, are more involved in church-related activities, and belong to more groups

and committees connected to religious institutions than men (Burns et al. 2001; Fowler et al. 2004).

For women, churches have been a particularly important location for participation and involvement. Churches have provided opportunities for community involvement and activism for women that were not present in other institutional and organizational settings. “While the role of church activist has been a traditional one for women in American society, the role of citizen political activist has not— perhaps because women were so long altogether excluded from citizenship and have yet to obtain the most powerful positions in national politics” (Burns et al. 2001). While many religious organizations limit women’s role as clergy and in other leadership positions, women hold many paid and unpaid lay positions within religious institutions and are active in church-based voluntary organization engaged in charity and other work. Studies of the role of religious institutions in political socialization provide evidence that the church plays a more important role in political socialization for women than for men and is an important location for political action. In addition, the church may influence women’s political attitudes more than men’s (Djupe et al. 2007). Finally, “women who are religiously active also tend to be politically active” (Gidengil et al. 2010).

## MASS MEDIA

The mass media have a profound effect on how we see ourselves as gendered individuals and what is expected of us within the society as men and women. The media also influence our political ideologies, interest in and views on particular political issues, and our assessment of potential and appropriate outlets for political participation (Chaffee et al. 1970). Research during the 1960s focusing on younger children found that media appear to have little effect or, at most, a reinforcing effect on socializing messages coming from parents and schools (Jennings and Niemi 1968). Subsequent research reveals that media are an important source for the transmission of political information and ideology (Conway et al. 1981; Eveland et al. 1998).

The internet and social media technologies have provided new opportunities and venues for political participation (Moy et al. 2005). This participation takes place in a variety of ways, including online activism, posting to social media, and online fundraising. While such activities have been dubbed “slacktivism” and relegated to a lower tier of activism,

evidence regarding the increasing use of these new technologies for political engagement is striking. The “Arab Spring” (Stepanova 2011; Lotan et al. 2011; Khondker 2011) and “Occupy Wall Street” (Gleason 2013; DeLuca et al. 2012; Conover et al. 2013) movements relied heavily on social media to communicate among protest members and spread their message and demands.

New technologies have the potential to impact more conventional forms of political participation as well. For example, internet access was associated with a higher probability of voting in the 2000 election in general. One study found that females with internet access were 12 percent more likely to vote than those without (Tolbert and McNeal 2003). There is also evidence that the internet may provide a more level playing field for women’s participation in politics. For example, while women lag behind in most traditional forms of political participation, men and women were shown to have roughly equivalent levels of online political participation during the 2008 presidential election cycle (Oser et al. 2013). Women’s high rate of social media usage may provide new opportunities for political engagement and participation, especially for younger adults.

### THE PRESENCE OF FEMALE CANDIDATES AND OFFICEHOLDERS

Critical of both media coverage of largely male leaders and a civics curriculum emphasizing the role of men in both political activism and leadership, researchers have hypothesized that the presence of female candidates and politicians would increase both political interest and participation among women (Atkeson 2003). Research focusing on how the presence and coverage of female candidates and political office holders affect women’s engagement, knowledge, and participation has shown mixed results. With regard to knowledge about candidates and races among potential voters, women scored higher in recognition of female candidates than did males. However, female voters were just as likely as male voters to correctly name their Congressional representatives, regardless of gender. This finding suggests that rather than increasing engagement among women, the presence of female candidates may reduce the engagement of male voters. Closeness of race and party affiliation of female candidates also play a role. Women are more knowledgeable about female candidates within their own party than those from other parties. The findings suggest

that an increase in the numbers of female candidates is not itself sufficient to increase women's participation in traditional political activities. It is the quality and viability of female candidates from their own party which appear to increase participation most significantly (Atkeson 2003; Burns et al. 2001). Highly visible female candidates and political leaders have also been important for women's engagement.

Some research has found that female candidates face more difficulties than do male candidates in fundraising. Although disputed by some findings which assert that male and female candidates garner similar amounts of campaign funds, Crespín and Deitz found that female candidates lag behind in the percentage of contributions from large donors (giving more than \$750), instead relying more on smaller individual contributors and from developing female-centered donor networks such as EMILY's List.

Cultural and structural barriers continue which make women less likely to run for office. These barriers then affect the number of candidates, officeholders, and party officials within political parties and institutions. Elder concluded that continued "political gender role socialization" was the primary barrier preventing women from running for office. First, women's socialized role within the family provides less time (on a day-to-day basis and over the life cycle) for women to engage in politics. As noted, women are socialized to believe that politics is a masculine domain. They are therefore less confident about their knowledge of politics and their ability to be an effective candidate and leader. They may also be less effective in political networking because this cultural view is widespread among both men and women. Finally, women lack female role models as candidates and officeholders, due in large part to political gender role socialization over multiple generations.

### POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION THROUGHOUT THE LIFE COURSE

Over the past 50 years, there have been significant changes in American society with regard to gender roles for both men and women. Women's educational attainment has increased dramatically, with females now outnumbering males in American colleges and universities (Lopez and Gonzalez-Barrera 2014). Women's labor force participation also has grown. In 1972, less than 44 percent of working age women were



employed outside of the home. That number reached over 57 percent in 2013 (U.S. Dept. of Labor). Notably, the growth of mothers in the labor force has risen from 45 percent in 1965 to 78 percent in 2000 (Bianchi 2011). Women's increasing participation in the public sphere has the potential to provide opportunities for women to gain political knowledge and engage in more conversations about political issues. The workplace is an important location for recruitment for political activity as well as a location for communicating about political issues. Currently, this potential remains unrealized as women's concentration in part-time and service sector occupations fails to provide the same climate and space for political discussions as occupations dominated by men (Schlozman et al. 1999).

Women's increased participation in the labor force has also affected men and women's roles within the family, with men's contribution to childcare and housework more than doubling over the past 40 years. During the same period, women have reported spending less time engaged in traditional housework, although significant disparities remain between husbands and wives (Bianchi 2011; Sayer et al. 2009). Increased participation in the workforce, rather than releasing women from housework, introduced a double bind of employment and family responsibilities that limits the breadth and depth of their participation in the public sphere. Time diary studies indicate that as mothers increase their paid work load, they "sacrifice leisure time and sleep...to meet the demands of children and jobs" (Bianchi 2011).

Marriage represents a significant loss of leisure time for women, while men report having more free time in marriage than when single. "For both private and collective activism, married women are less participatory than single women, while married men do not differ significantly from single men" (Coffé and Bolzendahl 2010). Women's greater domestic responsibilities in marriage limit the time they are able to invest in social and political activities (Herd and Meyer 2002).

The presence of children in the home does not appear, on its own, to have an effect on the likelihood of political participation for fathers and mothers, but, as discussed above, it may impact the amount of time devoted to political activity. The presence of children also affects women's view on their ability to pursue political careers. Women are slightly more likely than men to report that family responsibilities might hinder a career in politics (Elder 2004).

## VARIATIONS AND RECENT TRENDS

There is some evidence that the gender gap in political interest and participation is declining (Mayer and Schmidt 2004). Women's participation in both conventional and non-conventional forms of participation has increased over the past four decades. Since the women's movement, the number of women participating in social movements has steadily increased. A recent international study of political participation found no significant differences in political persuasion or participation in campaign activities between men and women (Beauregard 2014).

Women's participation as political office holders has also grown. Based on 2014 election outcomes, the Center for American Women and Politics projected that 104 female members of Congress and five female governors would hold office in 2015. The last four election cycles have featured women as candidates for President or Vice President of the United States from the Democratic and Republican parties. While representation remains far from parity, the greater presence of women as candidates, office holders, and leaders seems to reflect a larger shift in the gendered nature of political socialization.

Social and structural factors that influence participation are shifting as well. Women's increasing participation in the workforce and the high numbers of women earning college degrees should result in increases in measurable knowledge and perceived knowledge over time. The rising number of women serving in political office at the local, state, and national levels should come to alter perceptions of political knowledge. Given the evidence that economic and educational resources are important factors in political participation, the growing number of educated and economically advantaged women should produce political participation and contribution levels on par with men (Schlozman et al. 1994). Research also seems to support the contention that gender differences in participation will continue to dissipate. For example, a study of the 2008 election cycle found that while there was a small gender gap in political information efficacy among young people, there was no significant difference in political efficacy more generally between young men and women (Tedesco 2011).<sup>4</sup>

Earlier research on the impact of the life cycle on political socialization processes has been based on a set of potentially outdated assumptions about the division of gender roles within the family and the impact of gender on the educational and occupational experiences of men and women. While women continue to shoulder disproportionate responsibility in the

private sphere, women are more present than ever in the political sphere (Dalton 2013). The time constraints of childrearing may limit women's political participation for a time, but women without children in the home are participating in politics at comparable rates to their male counterparts.

There is also evidence from studies presented in this chapter to suggest that gender differences remain. First, women's role in the family has changed less rapidly than their role in the workplace. As women continue to disproportionately shoulder the burdens of childcare and housework, they are likely to be more constrained in the forms and extent of their political participation, at least during childbearing and childrearing years. The persistent pay gap between men and women reduces women's financial impact in politics, although the success of bundling organizations such as EMILY's List provide a method to make their contributions more potent. In addition, because women's involvement in politics is more likely to be connected to voluntary organizations and focused on local rather than national issues, it continues to be viewed as less important than men's more conventional, higher profile forms of participation. Finally, while today's young women report higher interest in politics than previous generations, gendered political socialization continues to reinforce the notion that politics is primarily a man's domain. What is clear from the research discussed in this chapter is that gender continues to play a key role in how we learn to be and participate as citizens.

## NOTES

1. See Atkeson (2003). In "Candidate Gender and the Political Engagement of Women and Men," Wolak reports of similar results on men's engagement using an experimental method.
2. Data from the most recent 2014 NAEP Civics Assessment indicate that less than one-quarter of students scored as proficient or advanced. [http://www.nationsreportcard.gov/hgc\\_2014/#civics](http://www.nationsreportcard.gov/hgc_2014/#civics).
3. For a discussion of research on the decline in attendance and problems with how attendance is measured, see Olson and Beckworth (2011).
4. The linguistic differences between these two items likely impacted the gender-differentiated results. The items assessing political efficacy were more generalized and were worded in a way that deflected self-assessment. Political Information Efficacy items were 'I' statements.

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## Race/Ethnicity

As the second term of the nation's first black president concluded, journalists debate whether the United States is now a postracial society (Coates 2015) or at least has come to a period where race will be increasingly less important in the future. While some progress has been made in reducing racial and ethnic disparities in political participation and representation, race and ethnicity continue to play a significant role in American politics and in society. The Pew Research Center found that Americans agreed that the US "needs to continue making changes" to achieve racial equality (2015a). In 2016, race-related shootings and subsequent mass protests across the nation undoubtedly added a sense of urgency to this expressed need.

### POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Political participation encompasses a wide variety of activities. Conventional political behaviors include voting, donating to parties and campaigns, volunteering for a candidate or political cause, and contacting a representative.

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Throughout this chapter, the terms *Latino* and *Hispanic* and *African American* and *black* will be used interchangeably. The use of a particular term is primarily based on which word is used in the literature being discussed and does not reflect any distinctions made as to the composition of these two populations.

Non-conventional political participation includes such behaviors as demonstrating, picketing, boycotting, and protesting as well as violent political uprisings, rioting, and revolution.

The historical gap in voter turnout that existed in the 1960s between black and white voters has largely disappeared (Abramson and Claggett 1991). The 2012 election marked the first time in reporting by the Census Bureau that African Americans voted at a higher rate than whites (File 2013). This historic shift reflects both a decline in voter turnout among whites and an increase in voter turnout among African American voters (3). Voter turnout for other racial and ethnic groups was also higher in 2012, but disparities remain. Voter turnout rates for Hispanic and Asian voters were more than 15 percentage points lower than for black and white voters in 2012 (3). This pattern has remained consistent over time, with Hispanics significantly less likely to vote than whites and African Americans (Harder and Krosnick 2008).

A number of factors influence the likelihood of voting. If a voter lacks confidence in their ability to make an informed choice or expresses concerns about the complicated nature of politics, they are less likely to vote (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996). This pattern is not uniform, however. Based on data from the 2008 election cycle, lower internal and external efficacy scores among African Americans had no impact on their likelihood to vote (Philpot et al. 2009). This greater likelihood for African Americans to vote instead has been linked to two related factors: a strong group consciousness among African Americans and the importance of community and other organizations (Murray and Vedlitz 1977). Of particular importance is the role of the church for political mobilization and participation among African Americans, which will be discussed more fully later in the chapter (Calhoun-Brown 1996).

Mobilization is a key predictor of voter turnout. Voters who report being contacted by a member of a political party or being asked to participate are more likely to vote.<sup>1</sup> Minorities are less likely to be contacted by political parties, and are less likely to be encouraged to participate in a campaign (Garcia and Sanchez 2004). They are, in a sense, left out of the process, thereby reducing voter turnout. Get out the Vote campaigns can improve voter turnout among naturalized and US-born Hispanics and naturalized Asian Americans (Michelson and Garcia Bedolla 2014). The 2008 election cycle illustrates how mobilization efforts can contribute to increasing voter turnout. The Democratic Party engaged in extensive canvassing in black and Hispanic neighborhoods in order to garner

support for Democratic candidates (Philpot et al. 2009). In addition to mobilization and empowerment impacts, population concentration is also important. Voter turnout among Hispanics and Asian Americans is higher in areas where they represent a greater concentration of the population (Leighley 2001; Jang 2009; Tuckel and Maisel 2008).

The voter turnout rates of Hispanics and Asian Americans remain significantly lower than those of black and white voters (Jackson 2003; File 2013). Researchers have pointed to a political divide between native-born and non-native-born groups in explaining this gap (Uhlener et al. 1989; Barreto 2005). Although non-citizens participate in a variety of political activities (Michelson and Garcia Bedolla 2014), they are barred from the primary form of political participation in the United States, voting. Citizen status accounts for as much as three-fourths of the gap in voting and for much of the gap in other forms of political participation as well (Uhlener et al. 1989). The proportion of the Hispanic and Asian populations in the US who are not citizens has increased dramatically (Logan et al. 2009). In 2000, nearly 30 percent of Hispanics in the United States were non-citizens (1205).

Within a single ethnic group, there are differences in voter turnout on the basis of foreign versus native-born status (Barreto 2005). In 2002, foreign-born Latinos in the Los Angeles area voted at rates higher than non-Hispanic whites while native-born Hispanics voted at significantly lower rates (84). Research on voter registration and the voting behavior of Hispanics and Asian Americans identifies other factors impacting voting and political participation. After controlling for age, socioeconomic position, education level, occupational category, and contact by political parties, studies have found that the gap between Hispanic and non-Hispanic white voters all but disappeared in presidential elections but remained in midterm election cycles (Bass and Casper 2001; Jackson 2003). In addition, diversity within the Hispanic/Latino and Asian American categories glosses over differences in levels of participation based on country of origin, length of time in the United States, primary language spoken, and first versus second (and beyond) generation citizenship (Bass and Casper 2001; Uhlener et al. 1989). When these factors are taken into account, the participation rate for Hispanics approaches that of whites and blacks, while Asian American voter turnout and participation rates remain significantly lower.

There are a variety of studies seeking to explain the low voter turnout rate among Asian Americans. First, Asian Americans appear to be less likely

to vote in bloc than black and Hispanic voters (Jacob 2006). Data also suggest a stronger ethnic identity tied to country of origin than the pan-ethnic identity more apparent within the Hispanic population (Aoki and Nakanishi 2001). This may account in part for lower levels of participation and greater diversity in voting patterns with regard to candidates and parties. Second, Asian Americans still constitute a relatively small percentage of the US population. Asian Americans compose 5.6 percent of the population, compared to 13.3 for African Americans and 17.6 percent for Hispanics.<sup>2</sup> With the exception of California and Hawaii, Asian Americans also lack a population concentration in any particular region necessary to exert significant political influence (Aoki and Nakanishi 2001).

Several factors influence the political participation of naturalized citizens. Length of time since immigration and naturalization often play a role (Bass and Casper 2001). Generally speaking, the longer a naturalized citizen spends in the United States, the more likely they are to register and vote. The political system in a country of origin is also important, with immigrants from democratic nations participating more in the United States than those who emigrate from authoritarian nations (Bass and Casper 2001; Goldsmith and Holzner 2015). In addition, English language proficiency contributes to participation (Cho 1999). Caution is warranted with respect to making generalized assumptions about participation rates across the Hispanic American or Asian American populations. Research indicates that within an immigrant population, there are substantial variations in political participation based on country of origin, conditions of entry, and other factors. Within the Hispanic population, for instance, immigrants from Cuba and the Dominican Republic have higher voter registration and participation than do immigrants from Mexico and El Salvador (Bass and Casper 2001; Jackson 2003). Similarly, Asian immigrants from the Philippines and India have higher rates of registration and voting than do those from other nations (Bass and Casper 2001). Research has also identified variations between voting rates of Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) and non-AAPI Asian Americans (Ong and Scott 2009). Other factors that increase voting for some groups do not affect or have the opposite effect on turnout for others. Home ownership, for example, increases the likelihood that Hispanics, whites, and blacks will vote, but appears to reduce voter turnout among Asian Americans (Jang 2009).

Turnout also is associated with the type and context of the registration process in place in an area (Vonnahme 2012; Highton 2004a). The most onerous barriers such as poll taxes and literacy tests have all but



disappeared (Highton 2004a), but new restrictions have been implemented across the country over the last decade (Rocha and Matsubayashi 2013). Districts with more restrictive registration and voting practices (early registration cutoff dates, reregistration requirements, limitations on absentee voting, and voter ID laws) are expected to have lower voter turnout rates, especially among poor and minority voters (Harder and Krosnick 2008). Election Day registration provisions appear to have only modest or no effects on who votes (Neiheisel and Burden 2012; Brians and Grofman 2001; Brians and Grofman 1999). Proponents for making Election Day a national holiday point to higher rates of voter turnout in other nations with such a policy (Cheng and Welt 2008). Empirical findings on the impact of voter restrictions and registration policies are inconsistent, finding only limited effects on minorities and the general population (Mitchell and Wlezien 1995; Rocha and Matsubayashi 2013), but significant effects for other groups such as the homeless and convicted felons (Ruth et al. 2016). As African American males are overrepresented among both of these populations, these voting policies and practices have racialized consequences.

Beyond the likelihood that a person will come to the polls, the racial and ethnic identities of both voters and candidates impact voting preferences (Hajnal 2009; Stockley 2008). The presence of minority candidates can mobilize and empower minority voters (Stokes-Brown 2006; Bobo and Gilliam 1990). In the 2008 Democratic primary, race was a particularly powerful predictor of the likelihood of a voter to select a particular candidate, with black voters strongly favoring Barack Obama and white and Hispanic voters supporting Hillary Clinton (Stockley 2008). Gender and age also play a role, but their effects are less pronounced than race. For example, “Black men and women are more likely to support Black candidates, yet Black women are more likely than Black men to support female candidates.”

Other racial cues can also impact candidate support (Maddox and Gray 2002). For example, darker skinned candidates are disadvantaged in candidate races, a fact that some campaigns have used to their advantage by selecting or altering photographs and video footage to damage an opponent (Weaver 2012; Terkildsen 1993). This pattern appears to be reversed among some groups of black voters (Lerman et al. 2015). In general, voters are racially and ethnically homogenous in their voting, preferring the candidate most racially and ethnically similar to themselves. The presence of minority-dominated districts, although due in

part to the system of political gerrymandering, may actually serve to benefit minority candidates and increase minority representation (Lublin 1999). The data, however, are less unequivocal. While it is true that minority candidates are more likely to be successful when they run within a district with higher percentages of minority voters, this pattern is not always perfect (Bullock 1975; Voss and Lublin 2001; Highton 2004b). Partisanship can play a more important role in voting than does the race of a candidate.

Although barred from voting, undocumented immigrants and immigrants who have not yet become citizens find ways to participate in the political sphere. Research on the Hispanic community in Los Angeles found that undocumented immigrants were heavily involved in “Get out the Vote” campaigns (Varsanyi 2006). Immigrants also participate in rallies, fundraising, and by providing endorsements within their communities for candidate. While Asian Americans are less likely to vote and to engage in many other forms of political participation, they are more likely to contribute money to political candidates and campaigns than are Hispanics. Nearly one-quarter of Asian Americans also reported working with others in their community to address a problem or concern (Lien et al. 2001).

Research on non-conventional forms of political participation has focused on the contributions of African Americans and Hispanics to social movements over the last century and beyond (Secret and Welsh 1982; Swain 2010; Magana and Xavier Mejia 2004). The involvement of African Americans in social movements spans most of US history and Hispanic-led movements in the United States date back at least to the 1840s. Social movements and protests are an important form of political participation for disadvantaged and underrepresented groups. Protests provide for “collective expression, disruptive in nature, and [are] designed to provide its users both with access to decision makers and with bargaining leverage in negotiations with them” (Eisinger 1974). Political resource models assert that political participation of all types, including protests and demonstrations, is predicated on garnering and possessing sufficient individual, economic, social, and other resources (Brady et al. 1995). African Americans who report high levels of political efficacy are more likely to participate in political demonstrations. In addition, social networks serve as a resource for recruitment and mobilization. Individuals who participate in protest are often those who are asked to do so—recruited by someone in their social network (Schussman and Soule 2005).

Many studies have focused on a single movement (Civil Rights, ERA, Pro-Choice, Chicano, Labor) or the contributions of a single group (African Americans, women, Hispanics) to a movement. There is relatively little comparative research examining the likelihood of participating in protests or social movements by race and ethnicity. When polled, a relatively small percentage of respondents report that they have participated in some type of protest activity. In one study, nearly 10 percent of African Americans, compared to 5 percent of whites and 4 percent of Latinos report having participated in a protest activity (Verba et al. 1993). Another study based on National Black Election Survey (NBES) data collected in 1996 reports participation rates for African Americans at double that number (Swain 2010). However, two more recent studies found no differences in the likelihood of participating in protest activities based on race, ethnicity, or citizenship status (Schussman and Soule 2005; Leal 2002).

Perhaps the most visible form of political participation is running for and holding public office. Not only are racial and ethnic minorities less likely to report volunteering for or contributing to a political campaign (Verba et al. 1993), they are also less likely to run for public office and are less successful overall, in winning public office. While a great deal of attention is given to the firsts in terms of candidates and office holders, the potential impact of the presence of minorities can hardly be overstated. The presence of a minority candidate can energize and encourage political participation for that racial or ethnic group. Voter turnout increased during the presidential candidacies of Jesse Jackson (Tate 1991) and Barack Obama (Philpot et al. 2009). Debates about the social and political legacy of the first African American President in United States' history, Barack Obama, began even before he became the Democratic Party candidate in 2008. There is evidence of the same phenomenon for Latino candidates (Barreto 2007). Greater representation is also assumed to result in a government not only more reflective of the US population, but also more responsive to the specific interests and needs of underrepresented groups. Further, minority candidates and office holders serve as role models.

Descriptive representativeness is valued among white, black, and Hispanic voters (Casellas and Wallace 2014). In addition, there are in-group preferences across all groups, with voters preferring candidates with whom they share sociodemographic characteristics such as race, ethnicity, and gender (Terkildsen 1993; Stockley 2008; Walton 2007). Voters may also rely on existing stereotypes when evaluating political candidates. Both white and black voters stereotype black candidates as liberal or conservative

based on their own ideological views (Lerman and Sadin 2016). Black politicians are also perceived as being “interested in only their group,” a view that may contribute to lower rates of support among white voters for black candidates (Schneider and Bos 2011). Minority candidates are most successful in districts with more diverse and greater minority populations (Branton 2009). While much of this research has focused on white voter preference for white candidates, findings for other racial and ethnic groups are less consistent (Highton 2004a; Sigelman et al. 1995). Co-ethnic representation is viewed more positively for black, Hispanic, and Asian voters than among whites (Schildkraut 2013; Casellas and Wallace 2014), and was evidenced by the strong preference of Latino voters for Barack Obama over Mitt Romney in the 2012 presidential election (Lopez and Taylor 2009). The desirability of descriptive representation among minority voters may reflect concerns over the responsiveness of white office holders to their needs (Griffin and Newman 2007).

### DIFFERENCES IN POLITICAL INTEREST

Interest in politics is an important precursor to political engagement and participation (Brady et al. 1999). Individuals who express greater interest are more likely to be recruited into various forms of political participation. Despite concerns regarding a lack of interest in politics among Americans (Neuman 1986), there is some evidence that political interest is stable or improving.<sup>3</sup> Recent studies of political interest fail to find substantial differences in political interest among racial and ethnic groups in the United States. In 2012, only 17 percent of respondents indicated that they were “not much interested” in the current campaign.<sup>4</sup> This number was only 7 percent for African Americans, compared to 20 percent for Hispanics, and 17 percent for non-Hispanic whites.<sup>5</sup> General interest in public affairs has remained relatively consistent as well, with 60 to 70 percent of the population reporting that they “follow what’s going in government and public affairs” at least some of the time from 1960 to 2008.<sup>6</sup> General interest levels were similar among non-Hispanic whites, Hispanics, and African Americans participating in the study.<sup>7</sup> In addition, research has also found that political interest is stable over the life course (Prior 2010; Shani 2009). Individuals who are interested in politics as young adults maintain their interest and engagement over time.

## DIFFERENCES IN KNOWLEDGE

Political interest is also positively associated with knowledge. Unlike political interest, however, there are significant differences in political knowledge scores across racial and ethnic groups in the United States (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1993). Blacks and Hispanics consistently score lower than non-Hispanic whites on most political knowledge scales (Mondak 1999). One such study of political knowledge revealed an enormous disparity with whites scoring a median of 54 percent correct compared to 26.5 percent correct for African American respondents (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1993). Among Hispanics, both immigrants and nonimmigrants score well below native-born non-Hispanics (Torney-Purta et al. 2006). While the gap appears to have narrowed somewhat, this pattern has remained for several decades (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1993). One counter to this is that knowledge levels are equal to or higher than their white counterparts when assessing knowledge of issues of greatest relevance to the Hispanic and African American communities (Nicholson et al. 2006; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1993).

A variety of explanations have been offered to account for these persistent gaps in knowledge among minority groups. One factor involved is a disparity in political resources (Verba et al. 1993). Lower knowledge levels among blacks are reflective of disparities in the access to and quality of sources of knowledge, such as schools and the workplace (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1993). Education is a key element for political socialization and higher levels of formal education are associated with higher political knowledge scores in general. This effect “is larger for general facts rather than for policy facts” and derives from both the formal civics curriculum as well as informal socialization within schools (Barabas et al. 2014). Since access to education is not equally distributed, racial and ethnic variations in political knowledge are not surprising. A sizable portion of Hispanic Americans are immigrants who did not have access to the formal civics curriculum provided in American schools (Nicholson et al. 2006; Abrajano 2015). Their children fare better but the knowledge gap remains (Galston 2001; Torney-Purta et al. 2006).

There have been criticisms about the manner in which questions about political knowledge are administered. The wording of questions and the formatting of response categories are argued to contribute to the knowledge gap, as questions may be confusing, poorly worded, or administered inconsistently. The scoring system for political knowledge tests has also

been critiqued (Prior and Lupia 2008). For example, studies indicate that women and minorities have a higher proportion of “Don’t Know” responses than whites and males (Mondak and Anderson 2004). This may reflect differences in socialization about politics or a disparity in efficacy rather than an actual gap in knowledge (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1993). The impact of discouraging or removing “don’t know” responses on political knowledge scores is uneven (Mondak and Anderson 2004; Luskin and Bullock 2011; Abrajano 2015).

What constitutes knowledge also has been called into question (Dolan 2011). Critics have pointed out that knowledge is defined largely as correctly identifying political office holders or candidates, answering policy questions, and correctly attributing individual candidates with specific policy positions or parties. This conflates information with “knowledge-in-use,” information that is employed to make political decisions. Research indicating that the correct attribution of policy positions for a candidate based on the respondents’ own policy stances provides some evidence that “those with a presidential preference appear to hold an informed preference” (Nicholson et al. 2006). Education is also used as a substitute for knowledge in research studies, a methodological choice that privileges white, non-Hispanic respondents. In addition, some scholars have asserted that the knowledge scores of racial and ethnic minorities reflect a perceptual bias rather than a systematic knowledge gap, finding little difference in knowledge scores after adjusting for differential item functioning (Abrajano 2015).

### POLITICAL VIEWS AND PARTY AFFILIATION

Several studies suggest that American citizens are becoming more politically polarized (Iyengar and Westwood 2014). “Affective polarization,” viewing those with opposing political views and positions negatively, has increased over the last several decades. At the same time, the percentage of Americans who identify as “independent” has overtaken Republicans and Democrats,<sup>8</sup> perhaps reflecting a growing distrust of the two major parties. However, even within this climate of both growing polarization and political party sorting, researchers find stability in the voting patterns of racial and ethnic groups. Group voter preference is least evident among white voters, although recent presidential elections resulted in at least a 12-point margin of white voters favoring the Republican candidate.<sup>9</sup>

Central to the research literature is the “linked fate” concept developed by political scientist Michael Dawson. Linked fate is a measure of the belief that one’s own “self-interests are linked to the interests of the group overall” (Dawson 1995). This is more than simply a shared consciousness: it reflects a recognition that the status of the entire group can impact an individual’s life chances. Perceptions of linked fate are high among African Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanics (Schildkraut 2013). Linked fate is also associated with group partisan identification (Evans et al. 2012) and a robust support for specific policies deemed most salient to the group’s membership.

Linked fate perceptions can be tempered by a number of factors, however, including skin color, nation of origin, socioeconomic status, religiosity, and immigration status.<sup>10</sup> Variations in party affiliation and voting within racial and ethnic groups illustrate these limitations. Whites accounted for nearly 90 percent of those affiliated with the Republican Party but for only 60 percent of respondents who identified as Democrat. African Americans are the most solidly Democratic in their party affiliation of any group, accounting for nearly two-thirds of responses.<sup>11</sup> Hispanics identify as Independent over Democratic or Republican by a wide margin (Evans et al. 2012). With the exception of Cuban Americans in some urban areas in some election cycles, Hispanics are largely Democratic in their voting preference. Since 1980, Hispanics have backed the Democratic over Republican presidential candidate with margins of 18 to 51 percentage points (Lopez and Taylor 2009). Asians also heavily identify as Independent (Lien et al. 2001) even though they tend to support Democratic candidates and strongly favored Barack Obama over his Republican rival in both 2008 and 2012.

There is also evidence of linked fate in political attitudes and support for particular policies and positions. For example, African Americans are significantly more likely to self-identify as liberal than whites and report higher levels of support for increased government spending for education, health, and welfare, among other issues (Seltzer and Smith 1985). On several social and moral issues, however, blacks were more conservative, reporting lower levels of acceptance for women in politics, abortion access, homosexuality, and married women’s employment outside of the home. While more conservative on these issues, African Americans are more likely than whites to oppose the death penalty, however, religious affiliation appears to play a significant role in this opposition (Britt 1998; Seltzer and Smith 1985). Religion also plays a significant role in

the overwhelming opposition to abortion among Hispanics (Bartkowski et al. 2012). While a majority of all Hispanics oppose abortion, conservative Protestant Hispanics displayed the strongest opposition to the practice.

The impact of race and ethnicity is mediated by social class, gender, occupation, educational attainment, and age. In addition, political socialization is influenced by experiences within the full range of social institutions. The following section reviews research on how socializing agents interact with the existing structures of race and ethnicity.

## FAMILY

Research spanning nearly 60 years has both questioned and reaffirmed the role of families in the political socialization process and the relative stability of the transmission of political attitudes and orientations from generation to generation (Jennings et al. 2009; Davies 1965; Dalton 1982). The literature on how gender and social class impact parental political socialization is far more extensive than that on race, ethnicity, and immigration status. What can be drawn from the more general literature on race-based differences in the parental transmission of values and beliefs and the scant research focused on political socialization is that race and ethnicity can have a significant impact on the sociopolitical development of children of color and immigrant children that continues throughout their lives.

Research on parental value transmission has emphasized how social class is connected to what parents define as the most important characteristics for their children to develop and exhibit (Kohn 1959, 1963). Research applying a concerted cultivation model found that social class accounted for some, but not all, of the differences in parenting style among white parents versus African American, Hispanic, and Asian American parents (Cheadle and Amato 2011). In addition, immigrant parents who spoke a language other than English in the home were less likely to practice concerted cultivation. Black parents, regardless of social status, placed a higher value on conformity and on equality than did their white counterparts, priorities with potential political ramifications. There is also some evidence that Asian American children internalize parental values more fully than children from other racial and ethnic groups, resulting in more stability in political orientation and identification from one generation to



another (Stewart et al. 1999). While some tentative conclusions may be drawn by examining general literature on values transmission and racial socialization, it is clear that more research is needed to further examine this issue.

A person's level of political engagement is linked to the political engagement of their parents (Verba et al. 1995; Warren and Wicks 2011). Discussions within the home about political issues are positively associated with political engagement among youth and adults. The stronger and more central an issue or value is for the parents, the greater the likelihood of discussion and therefore intergenerational transmission (Jennings et al. 2009). Lower levels of engagement among Hispanics and African American parents reduce the political engagement levels of their teens (McIntosh et al. 2007; Warren and Wicks 2011). Research on marginalized youths found that parental discussion was a significant predictor of both sociopolitical development and political participation (Diemer 2012). The educational attainment of parents explains much of the difference in exposure to politics at home between African American and white families and Latino and white families (Verba et al. 2003). Hispanic and African American families report lower levels of family communication more generally which hinders the accumulation of political knowledge among youth and political socialization outcomes (Austin and Nelson 1993).

As noted previously, children are not simply passive recipients of political information from their parents or other sources. In all families, children "possess the power to transform patterns of family communication in ways that benefit themselves and their parents" (McDevitt and Chaffee 2002). Exposure to the civics curriculum in schools, mock election activities (Linimon and Joslyn 2002; Eveland et al. 1998), and media coverage of politics (Austin and Nelson 1993) can prompt children to initiate family discussions about political issues and influence parental political behavior. For immigrant families in particular, children often have an important role in teaching their parents about US politics, creating a "trickle-up" model of political socialization (Wong and Tseng 2008; McDevitt and Chaffee 2002). Research on the social movement participation of second-generation immigrant youth shows the same child-to-parent transmission pattern where children can and do mobilize their parents to participate in political demonstrations and protests (Bloemraad and Trost 2008).

## SCHOOLS

In addition to teaching a nation's social and political history, schools also socialize children about their larger role within formal organizations and social institutions. Education is widely viewed as the "great equalizer," and American schools have played a vital role in socializing children (both immigrant and native) into their roles as American citizens for more than a century. Generally, individuals with more education are more likely to participate politically than those with less education (Galston 2001). But there are vast disparities in educational outcomes based on race, class, and gender. African Americans experience curricular deficits in civics-related courses (Kahne and Middaugh 2008). Latino, Asian American, and African American students are less likely to report an "open classroom climate" that fosters discussion than do white students. In contrast to their goal to equalize opportunity and promote civic participation, schools instead reinforce existing disparities by providing more and higher quality classroom-based and extracurricular opportunities for civic learning to those groups (whites, wealthy) who already report higher levels of political efficacy, engagement, and participation.

Much of the disparity in civic education outcomes is due to school-based, rather than individual-based characteristics (Torney-Purta et al. 2007). For example, students who attended schools where a high proportion of the student body was Latino were found to fare worse on civic knowledge tests than did students in other schools, regardless of an individual student's racial or ethnic identity. This finding reinforces the idea that student knowledge is not only determined by individual factors, such as race, ethnicity, or family background (Andolina et al. 2003; Torney-Purta et al. 2007). Researchers also find that successful programs have positive outcomes for all students involved, regardless of economic or minority status (Morgan and Streb 2001). Service learning programs (Morgan and Streb 2001), classroom discussions of political issues (Pasek et al. 2008; Torney-Purta 2007), and classroom experiences that foster the development of "political action skills" (Beaumont 2011) have all been shown to improve student efficacy, knowledge, and anticipated voting behaviors for students regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, and native status (Andolina et al. 2003; Torney-Purta et al. 2007).

## VOLUNTEERISM AND PARTICIPATION IN VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS

Contrary to human capital models that would predict lower rates of volunteerism among disadvantaged groups, including poor and minority populations, research finds high rates of volunteerism among women, African Americans (Gutierrez et al. 2014), and first- and second-generation immigrant Hispanics and Asian Americans (Ishizawa 2015). Racial gaps in volunteering and charitable giving identified in initial statistical models are diminished or eliminated when additional variables, such as socioeconomic status, are controlled (Marks and Jones 2004; Mesch et al. 2006). While studies have identified a gap in volunteerism between Asian and non-Asian groups, this gap appears to be diminishing among younger Americans (Ong and Scott 2009).

There are differences, however, in where volunteers contribute their time. For example, blacks and whites were both found to focus their volunteer efforts on needs within their own communities, with more hours volunteered in organizations primarily serving their own racial group (Wilson 2000; Mesch et al. 2006). In addition, church membership is a significant predictor of volunteerism (Mattis et al. 2004). Volunteerism is also important for immigrant populations, because it provides “an important avenue for engagement in civil society” for non-citizens (Ishizawa 2015). Non-citizens can volunteer for political campaigns, voter registration, and fundraising even though other political acts, such as direct contributions to candidates and voting may be prohibited (Leal 2002). Several studies have noted higher rates of volunteerism among Asian and Hispanic immigrants than native-born Asian and Hispanic Americans (Ong and Scott 2009).

Data on monetary donations reflect the same findings, where differences in giving across racial and ethnic groups disappear when socioeconomic factors are taken into account (Rooney et al. 2005). Further, while African Americans have a long-standing tradition of philanthropy, African Americans appear to be a largely untapped source for charitable contributions and volunteerism. This may be the result of racialized assumptions about motivations and willingness to give and volunteer (Van Slyke et al. 2007; Tang et al. 2012).

Research has noted the impact of union membership on various forms of participation and volunteerism. Unions provide a primary location for civic volunteerism, providing both skills and access to opportunities for political and non-political participation (Verba et al. 1995). Union

membership is associated with higher levels of charitable giving, in part because of the union's own collaboration with fundraising organizations such as the United Way (Zullo 2011). This impact is greatest among lower and middle-income union members (Leighley and Nagler 2007). Union membership has also been found to significantly increase the likelihood that an individual will participate in a variety of political activities, including volunteering for a party, attending a political rally, contacting officials, and signing petitions (Kerrissey and Schofer 2013). Membership is also associated with higher levels of nonpolitical giving and memberships in community organizations for African Americans and minority groups (Kerrissey and Schofer 2013).

## CHURCH

A majority of Americans continue to identify as religious and report higher levels of religious attendance than citizens of other Western nations (Grant and Djupe 2001; Schwadel 2013). Although denominational affiliation has been declining over the last two decades (Schwadel 2013), the church as an institution continues to have a central role in the lives of many Americans and continues to play a significant role in American politics (Grant and Djupe 2001). As with other types of organizational memberships, church membership is associated with increased political participation (Jones-Correa and Leal 2001). The church has and continues to engage in voter registration and mobilization efforts, nurture religious doctrines that support political participation, and to form a "base for significant social and political movements" (Djupe et al. 2007).

The impact of the church on political participation extends beyond the pulpit and explicit political mobilization efforts within the church. Informal conversations among congregants within the church can serve to mobilize members to engage in political activity (McKenzie 2004). Church attendance is also positively associated with voter turnout among Asian Americans (Wong et al. 2005) and Latinos (Jones-Correa and Leal 2001). Immigrants to the United States report higher levels of religious participation after immigration than in their nations of origin, reflecting the role of churches and temples in community integration for these individuals (Chen 2002; Akresh 2011). In addition to the impact of church membership and attendance on volunteerism and political engagement, "subjective religiosity" can also influence membership and participation in other types of social justice groups (Mattis et al. 2004). Those who identify

as more religious are more likely to engage in outreach and justice-seeking activities, likely as a result of a belief that their faith calls them to do so.

For congregants, the church can provide both spiritual and social benefits. It contributes to both individual and group identity formation and social cohesion among its members. It is also an important location for emotional support and social networking (Brown and Brown 2003). In this way, the church provides a form of “bonding social capital” that is associated with higher rates of voter turnout among African American churchgoers (Liu et al. 2009). It is also a location for the development of civic skills that can be applied to the political realm (Schwadel 2002; Harris 1994; Jones-Correa and Leal 2001). This is particularly important for members of disadvantaged groups who generally possess fewer of these skills (Verba et al. 1995). There is also evidence, as discussed in the previous chapter, that holding lay leadership positions makes it more likely that an individual will be recruited for political activity (Djupe et al. 2007).

Research on the role of churches during the Civil Rights movement has contributed to a view that most black churches are a primary location for the recruitment and organization of political activity (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990). While the church has played and continues to play an important role in the political socialization and mobilization of African Americans, the black church is not monolithic and its influence on parishioners is far from absolute (Calhoun-Brown 1996). Several factors influence the relationship between the church and political action among African Americans and other minority groups. First, the content of sermons, Bible studies, liturgies, and hymns matters. Churches that emphasize civic and political issues foster greater political action than those that do not (Brown and Brown 2003; Cavendish 2000). Parishioners who participate in prayer groups are more likely to engage in political action than those who do not. Church doctrines that emphasize social justice, volunteerism, advocating for the disadvantaged and assisting those in need, foster higher levels of volunteerism in “social change organizations” (Guo et al. 2013).

Compared to the research on the role of churches in mobilizing and supporting specific political movements, less has been written about how religious faith and church membership affect political partisanship and voting behaviors. Research on the relationship between political attitudes and religious affiliation does reveal some patterns among racial and ethnic groups in the United States. Religious affiliation can affect support for a particular candidate if the candidate shares a church affiliation with a potential voter (Campbell et al. 2011). The Republican Party has begun

to court Evangelical Hispanic and black voters in an attempt to draw these groups away from their long-standing alignment with Democrats (McDaniel and Ellison 2008). The growing religious diversity among Latinos may reduce their alignment with the Democratic Party over time, as non-Catholic Latinos show stronger support for Republican candidates (Kelly and Kelly 2005). Support for specific policies is also linked to religious affiliation. Research on support for abortion finds that Protestant Latinos were more opposed to abortion than their Catholic counterparts (Bartkowski et al. 2012). Even among members of a particular religious tradition, support for public policies can vary based on racial and ethnic identity. For example, African Americans who attend fundamentalist Protestant churches were found to be less supportive of the death penalty than white congregants, even though there were no significant differences in the doctrines of the churches each group attended (Britt 1998).

#### CONTINUING SIGNIFICANCE OF RACE AND ETHNICITY IN POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION

There have been major changes in American politics and society over the past half century. Demographically, the United States is growing more diverse. The proportion of the US population that is first or second generation citizens is projected to exceed levels from the period of Great Migration of the early twentieth century (Pew Research Center 2015b). In particular, the composition of US immigrants is changing. In 2011, Asia was “the largest region of origin among recently arrived immigrants.” While Asian Americans compose a relatively small portion of the United States population, their political influence is likely to increase over time given these shifting demographics among immigrant groups.

Minority representation is growing at all levels of government in the United States. The 114th Congress was the most diverse in US history, with 91 African American, Hispanic, Asian American, and Native Americans serving in the House and Senate (Manning 2016). This number constitutes 17 percent of Congressional representatives (Manuel 2015). In addition, minority participation in conventional and non-conventional politics is also increasing. As noted earlier, the presidential election of 2012 represented the first time that African American voter turnout was higher than turnout for white voters. It also showed increased turnout for Hispanic and Asian voters.

In light of demographic shifts and improvements in participation and representation, it is tempting to conclude that race and ethnicity are becoming less important in our daily and political lives. Disparities in knowledge and voter turnout remain significant, however. Race continues to play a role in evaluating and electing candidates. Voters continue to prefer candidates “like themselves,” reflecting a potential distrust in the ability of candidates from a different racial or ethnic group to understand and respond to their needs. Social institutions such as schools have the potential to overcome some of these issues, but too often reinforce and reproduce existing inequalities by providing unequal access to resources and experiences critical to sociopolitical development. In the final analysis, there continues to be strong evidence that race, ethnicity, and citizen status will remain important predictors of political engagement and participation. Furthermore, new historical contexts, such as the period of race-related violence in 2015 and 2016 that prompted the Black Lives Matter movement can affect all aspects of a nation’s political life.

## NOTES

1. Green et al. (2003), Green (2004), Gerber and Green (2000), Wielhouwer (2003).
2. Numbers represent persons identifying one race based on data from July 1, 2015. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/00>.
3. American National Election Studies n.d. “The ANES Guide to Public Opinion and Electoral Behavior.” Retrieved <http://www.electionstudies.org/nesguide/gd-index.htm>.
4. American National Election Studies n.d. “The ANES Guide to Public Opinion and Electoral Behavior.” Retrieved [http://www.electionstudies.org/nesguide/toptable/tab6d\\_6.htm](http://www.electionstudies.org/nesguide/toptable/tab6d_6.htm).
5. American National Election Studies n.d. “The ANES Guide to Public Opinion and Electoral Behavior.” Retrieved [http://www.electionstudies.org/nesguide/2ndtable/t6d\\_6\\_1.htm](http://www.electionstudies.org/nesguide/2ndtable/t6d_6_1.htm).
6. American National Election Studies n.d. “The ANES Guide to Public Opinion and Electoral Behavior.” Retrieved [http://www.electionstudies.org/nesguide/toptable/tab6d\\_5.htm](http://www.electionstudies.org/nesguide/toptable/tab6d_5.htm).
7. American National Election Studies n.d. “The ANES Guide to Public Opinion and Electoral Behavior.” Retrieved [http://www.electionstudies.org/nesguide/2ndtable/t6d\\_5\\_3.htm](http://www.electionstudies.org/nesguide/2ndtable/t6d_5_3.htm).

8. See: Jones, J.M. January 11, 2016. *Democratic, Republican Identification near Historical Lows*. Washington, D.C. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/188096/democratic-republican-identification-near-historical-lows.aspx?version=print>.
9. American National Election Studies n.d. "Presidential Vote 2 Major Parties 1948–2012." *Guide to Public Opinion and Electoral Behavior*. Retrieved [http://www.electionstudies.org/nesguide/2ndtable/t9a\\_1\\_1.htm](http://www.electionstudies.org/nesguide/2ndtable/t9a_1_1.htm).
10. See: Sanchez and Masuoka (2010), Masuoka (2006), Kotler-Berkowitz (2005), Bartkowski et al. (2012), Britt (1998).
11. Newport, F. February 8, 2013. *Democrats Racially Diverse; Republicans Mostly White*. Washington, D.C. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/160373/democrats-racially-diverse-republicans-mostly-white.aspx>.

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## Social Class

Social class is one of the most central, albeit notoriously ambiguous concepts within the social sciences. While income is the most common indicator, measures of social class incorporate items such as self-reported class identification, occupational categorizations, and educational attainment into a composite assessment of social class or socioeconomic status (SES). These components are not always in alignment: there are wide variations in wages and salaries for individuals within an established educational category and in the educational credentials required to hold similarly situated occupations. In addition, social cohesion or a shared group identity within social classes is less evident than that within racial/ethnic or gender groups, particularly within the United States. “Individuals with the same level of educational attainment ... do not necessarily have any organizational anchor connecting them outside of their occupational locations” (Manza and Brooks 2008). These factors contribute to the complexity of both accurately assessing social-class position and examining the impact of those positions on political socialization and behavior.

A growing view in the late twentieth century was that economic and political shifts were leading to a decline in the importance of class in contemporary societies. The decline of labor unions and manufacturing, alongside the shifting nature of workplace hierarchies with the growth of white-collar and managerial positions, led scholars to question long-held conceptions of social class derived from Karl Marx and Max Weber (Clark

and Lipset 1991). Arguments were made that class politics was being replaced by an increasingly fragmented workforce and a citizenry increasingly focused on social status and issue politics rather than class-situated issues (van der Waal et al. 2007; Clark and Lipset 1991; Hechter 2004). The increasing salience of issues such as abortion, same-sex marriage, and immigration is provided as evidence of the declining importance of social class with regard to party allegiance and voting behavior. What appears to be a decline in class voting may instead be explained as increasingly divergent positions within classes of voters with regard to social and economic issues (van der Waal et al. 2007). Despite debate over its waning importance, there is still considerable support for the contention that social class, however it is measured, continues to play a significant role in the process of making citizens (Brooks and Manza 1997b).

### CLASS VOTING AND CLASS POLITICS

A distinction is to be made between class voting and class politics. Class politics emphasizes the centrality of economic position on party allegiance. This view rests, in part, on a shared sense of class consciousness and a pattern of voting for the party which most reflects or attends to one's economic interests (Weakliem and Adams 2011). Class politics can be most closely associated with Western European nations that have strong, stable labor and other class-based parties (Hout and Moodie 2008). Class voting, more commonly associated with the United States, is less rigid. While it classifies the "party structure that freezes both classes and voters in place," it also provides "the prospect of shifting alliances, new coalitions, and realignment." Throughout much of the twentieth century in the United States, working-class voters have strongly supported candidates from the Democratic Party (Lipset 1960; Campbell et al. 1960). This was especially true for members of both public and private labor unions. In contrast, wealthier white-collar workers, particularly business owners and members of upper management, have supported Republican candidates. In fact, there is less variation at the top of the economic ladder with regard to voting patterns than at the bottom (Weakliem and Adams 2011).

While classes may align with a candidate or party within a particular election, political realignments can occur over time. Over the last few decades, there have been shifts in the constituencies of both parties. One prominent example is the movement of Southern White voters away from the Democratic Party (Carmines and Stanley 1992; Carmines and

Stimson 1989). At the same time, professionals and the highly educated have begun to shift away from the Republican Party (Brooks and Manza 1997a). These realignments or party sorting has been seen as evidence for a decline in class voting among some researchers (Clark et al. 1993; Clark and Lipset 1991; McVeigh and Sobolewski 2007). For example, there has been a steady decline in strong party identification. The number of “independents” whose votes may shift from Democratic to Republican based on election cycle, candidates, or views on salient issues, has been growing. The Gallup Panel first reported that the percentage of Americans polled identifying as “Independent” exceeded both dominant parties in 1990 and these numbers continued to grow to over 40 percent by 2011 (Jones 2016). The platforms of both leading parties have shifted as well. Each party is placing more emphasis on “cultural” rather than “economic” planks, in part to draw supporters across class-based and party-based lines (van der Waal et al. 2007; Hechter 2004).

However, discussions of this purported trend away from class voting in the United States have been criticized for drawing on overly simplistic models of social class distinctions and failing to explore the class-based nature of non-voting (Zipp and Smith 1982; Beeghley 1986). Analyses use a binary model for social class based on blue-collar and white-collar occupational distinctions. This approach has become less reflective of the workforce given the decline in manufacturing and skilled labor as well as the increasing educational achievement for both working- and middle-class workers over the past four decades. In addition, educational attainment has a “liberalizing” effect on citizens, making them more likely to vote for Democratic or left-leaning third-party candidates (van der Waal et al. 2007). Perspicacious models indicate that, in the United States, consistency in class voting remains more the norm than does realignment (Hout et al. 1995). Models focusing on income rather than on traditional composite measures of social class that include occupation or education yield similar results regarding the continued importance of class voting (van der Waal et al. 2007; Weakliem and Heath 1994).

## POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Socioeconomic status is strongly associated with both traditional and non-traditional forms of political participation in the United States (Solt 2008). There is evidence that “class differences in political participation ... are far greater in the United States than in other countries” (Manza and

Brooks 2008). Compared to wealthier citizens, lower income Americans tend to vote at lower rates and to participate less in a variety of other political behaviors, including writing letters to members of Congress and protesting (Soss and Jacobs 2009). The ability to participate is predicated on access to information about opportunities to participate and efforts to mobilize. These opportunities are stratified based on education and socioeconomic status, with more opportunities “concentrated among high-status individuals” (Leighley 1995). Research on protesters from the 1960s, for example, finds that they were overwhelmingly from upper- and upper middle-class backgrounds (Sherkat and Blocker 1994). Explanations for this protest gap center on socialization and on a lack of social capital among disadvantaged groups.

Since the 1940s, researchers consistently have found lower rates of voter turnout in the United States among the most disadvantaged groups (Lipset 1960/1980; Wichowsky 2012; Beeghley 1986). Research examining the factors which contribute to or diminish the likelihood that a citizen will vote has emphasized factors such as income, occupation, education, and voluntary and organizational memberships. The higher a person’s income, the more likely they are to vote in presidential elections. In 2012, individuals with a family income over \$100,000 reported a 75 percent voting rate compared to less than 50 percent for those earning less than \$20,000 (U.S. Census 2012). Occupation also has a “substantial effect on turnout,” with professionals significantly more likely to vote than “semiskilled and unskilled workers” (Hout et al. 1995). Voting is higher among those who see their jobs or livelihood as directly affected by election results. Public-sector workers, for example, have high rates of voter turnout, as do farmers (Rosenfeld 2010). Education is positively associated with voting as well. More than three-quarters of individuals holding at least a college degree reported voting in 2012 compared to just over 50 percent of those with only a high school diploma, and less than 40 percent of those with less than a high school education (U.S. Census 2012).

Campaign contributions are clearly linked to social class (Manza and Brooks 2008; Burris 2001). Financial resources provide access to politicians and candidates, as in the case of political fundraising events and candidate-donor meetings. Contributions come directly from individuals and through organizational memberships, corporations, foundations, and third-party entities such as political action committees (PACs). In the United States, wealthy individuals contribute far more money than the non-wealthy in all of these categories (Gilens 2005; Francia et al. 2005;

Broyles and Allen 1989). Individual donor contributions are particularly critical in Congressional campaigns and may have more influence on decision making in these elections (Francia et al. 2005). While union members are more likely to donate money for political purposes than are non-union members, the total financial impact of these contributions is unclear (Kerrissey and Schofer 2013).

Time is another important resource in predicting political participation. Just as time serves as a participatory barrier for women because of family responsibilities, the allocation of time is also related to socioeconomic status (Piven and Cloward 2000). There are institutional barriers to political participation. Critics have argued that both the timing and structure of US elections disadvantage lower income individuals (Cheng and Welt 2008). In many countries, Election Day is a national holiday or spans multiple days, and there are frequently provisions for employees to take time off from work to cast their votes (Beeghley 1986). The US has also been slow to adopt electronic and absentee balloting, and voter registration regulations are complex and cumbersome in many states (Bowler and Donovan 2008).

In addition to barriers to voting, other forms of participation are also time dependent. The ability to attend rallies and speeches, canvass door-to-door, or volunteer in a campaign office is economically stratified. Shift workers, for example, are less likely to be available for evening and weekend political activities. Researchers have documented a growing “leisure time” gap between the middle and upper classes and the lower and working classes (Beeghley 1986). Increased leisure time is associated with higher levels of sociability and the ability to participate in political activities (Foschi and Lauriola 2014). Higher income individuals are more likely than lower income individuals to volunteer (Wilson 2000; Smith 1994), participate in community and other social organizations (Janoski and Wilson 1995), and engage in social activities (Foschi and Lauriola 2014). Social interaction fosters political communication, a key element in the formation of political views and for garnering political knowledge. For the maintenance of political democracy, the lack of these types of opportunities for the economically disadvantaged is of particular concern.

Social networks are an important source of social capital that can play a role in political participation. Strong social networks provide access to and support for political action (Hays 2015). Social class is related to both network access and development through political and non-political forms of participation. Students from more affluent backgrounds are more

involved in extracurricular activities than are their less affluent counterparts (McFarland and Thomas 2006). “Involvement in politically salient youth voluntary associations...directly influences long-term political participation.” The effect of background is two-fold. First, parenting styles and the types of activities that parents value for their children differ by social class. This affects the selection of activities available to a student. The type of activity is an important factor in future political participation. Second, a student’s social class affects his or her access to extracurricular activities. Students from lower SES backgrounds are involved in fewer activities, limiting the additive impact of their experiences on future political participation.

In adulthood, organizational memberships function in similar ways. Membership in an organization provides opportunities to communicate about shared interests and concerns (Beeghley 1986). In addition, organizations are important sources of new information, through informal discussion among members and through informational and positional materials disseminated by organizations. Finally, many organizations provide interest representation to its members in the political sphere, fundraising, lobbying, and engaging in political action on their behalf. With the exception of labor unions, lower- and working-class citizens are less likely than their wealthier counterparts to hold organizational memberships (Beeghley 1986). Labor unions mobilize members politically and encourage political actions through their endorsement of parties and candidates, engagement in collective action, fostering discussions about political issues, cultivating “organizational and political skills” among its members, and making financial contributions to parties, candidates, and causes that support the interests of their constituencies (Kerrissey and Schofer 2013).

Union membership has been studied widely with regard to its impact on political participation. Two divergent views emerge from the research: First, union participation may provide a counter to the larger general pattern of voter turnout and participation among lower income groups (Kerrissey and Schofer 2013). Union members vote at higher rates than non-union workers (Rosenfeld 2010; Leighley and Nagler 2007). This gap is most evident among public-sector workers such as teachers, police officers, firefighters, and government employees (Rosenfeld 391). Beyond voting, union membership is positively associated with other types of political activities, such as making campaign donations (Asher et al. 2001) as well as non-political behavior such as community volunteering and charitable giving (Kerrissey and Schofer 2013).



A second view questions the influence of labor unions in the voter turnout (Rosenfeld 2010). While union leaders are politically active, this level of engagement rarely trickles down to the rank and file membership (Rosenfeld; Sousa 1993). Declining voter turnout among lower and middle-income workers in elections over the last 40 years has been tied to the decline in union membership (Leighley and Nagler 2007). The class-based nature of union membership has changed with declines in traditional, blue-collar, industrial unionization rates and the growth of public-sector unions. This shift is important for several reasons. Public-sector employees have a consistently high rate of voter turnout. This is due to the inherently political nature of their jobs. In addition, public-sector positions are increasingly jobs which require a college education. Higher levels of education are also associated with higher voter turnout. This group's high voter turnout, then, is potentially more a result of the type of occupations and the education required for those occupations than is unionization.

The digital revolution is changing both the nature and the context of political participation in the United States (Tolbert and McNeal 2003). The growing use of the internet to connect voters to candidates has the potential to overcome the disparities in political participation among social-class groups by creating new forms of access and opportunities for engagement (Krueger 2002). This potential, however, has been largely unmet, due to a continuing digital divide. Wealthier individuals are both more likely to participate in politics and are more likely to have internet access (Tolbert and McNeal 2003). Lower- and working-class individuals are less likely to have home internet access and less likely to be exposed to political information online (Xenos and Moy 2007; Schlozman et al. 2010). They are also less likely to participate in offline political activities. In short, inequality in political participation online reflects the inequality already present in participation offline (Oser et al. 2012).

Participatory inequality can have significant outcomes. If lower income and higher income individuals hold similar views on political issues, then a lack of participation by those at the bottom of the economic strata is not cause for concern (Soroka and Wlezien 2008; Kelly and Enns 2010). If their interests and views differ, however, a lack of participation by the working and lower classes results in a tilted set of political outcomes that favors wealthier constituents whose voices and concerns are more heavily represented (Gilens 2009). There is some evidence that government officials and policy decisions tend to reflect the views and positions of

the middle and upper classes over those of the poor and working classes on social and economic issues (Berinsky 2002; Page et al. 2013; Gilens 2009). Lower levels of participation for working- and lower-class citizens result in less access to representatives and candidates. Because officials are less likely to hear the views and concerns of these constituents, political decision making is skewed toward those who have greater access—the middle and upper classes.

### DIFFERENCES IN POLITICAL INTEREST AND ENGAGEMENT

Two divergent perspectives dominate the literature on the role of social class and economic inequality in political engagement. Relative power theory asserts that groups with fewer resources would be less likely to be politically engaged. Wealthier groups have the ability to marginalize the concerns of the poor and to ensure effectively that their own interests and concerns are forefront in the political sphere. The lack of visibility of their interests and the lack of responsiveness to their concerns reduce engagement of the poor and resign them to their fate. Conflict theory asserts the opposite: deprivation and inequality increase political engagement among the poor. Both perspectives fail to account for the complexity of issues, policy formation, and governance. Research on five industrialized nations found support for relative power theory. Income inequality has a negative effect on electoral participation, political interest, and political discussion for all but the highest income quintile (Solt 2008).

As discussed in previous chapters, the political interest and engagement of children is related to the political interest and engagement of their parents (Dalhouse and Frideres 1996; McIntosh et al. 2007; Warren and Wicks 2011). Children raised by politically engaged and active parents are more likely to be politically active in adulthood. In contrast, children whose parents expressed less interest in politics are less engaged and interested in politics later in life. Early messages about politics seem to have lasting impact as research indicates that political interest is remarkably stable over the life course (Prior 2010).

### DIFFERENCES IN KNOWLEDGE

Civic knowledge promotes political participation, the support for democratic values, and an understanding of the relevance of politics for the daily lives of citizens (Galston 2001). A lack of knowledge is associated

with lower levels of political interest and lower civic and political participation. Researchers have repeatedly pointed out that, as a whole, Americans have relatively low levels of political knowledge (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1993). In 1998, more than one-third of American high school seniors surveyed scored “below basic” on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Civics Assessment (Galston 2001). In 2014, more than one-quarter of eighth graders taking the test scored “below basic” level (U.S. Dept. of Education 2014).

Assessing political knowledge can be problematic (Mondak 1999; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1993). What should a citizen know in order to be deemed knowledgeable about politics? Measures have emphasized different areas of knowledge, including questions on current political issues and events, the form and function of government, and current and past political leaders (Jennings 1996). Several researchers have argued that “don’t know” responses may lead to inaccurately low assessments of knowledge because individuals are not confident in their knowledge, measuring lower levels of efficacy rather than knowledge (Luskin and Bullock 2011; Mondak and Anderson 2004). Women, for example, are more likely to select “don’t know” than are men, but this is thought to be connected to how women are socialized to be less confident and understate their competency (Mondak and Anderson 2004).

Political knowledge is also unequally distributed among the population. “Socio-economic background influences adolescents’ civic experiences and their opportunities for acquiring civic knowledge and practicing civic activities” (Manganelli et al. 2014). Data from the NAEP indicate that parental education level is an important predictor of a student’s performance on its Civics Assessment (U.S. Dept. of Education 2014a). Eighth graders with parents who did not complete high school scored an average of 30 points below students whose parents had college degrees and nearly half of these children scored “below basic” on the assessment (U.S. Dept. of Education 2014b). In addition, children eligible for the NSLP (National School Lunch Program) scored 27 points on average lower than those not eligible, with over 40 percent scoring below basic level (U.S. Dept. of Education 2014c). These differences in knowledge continue into adulthood, where income and education remain strong predictors of political knowledge (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996).

## COMMUNICATION AND PERSUASION

Political communication research indicates that perceptions of expertise are key to the selection of those with whom one will discuss politics (Ryan 2010). Conversation about politics is more likely to occur if the person believes their potential discussion partner is politically well informed. Assessment about the knowledge of potential discussants relies, in part, on existing stereotypes which assume lower levels of engagement and knowledge for women, minorities, those with less education, and the poor. Individuals in these groups are disadvantaged by such biased assessments. The poor in particular, are “underrepresented among the high discussants and overrepresented among the low discussants for both public and private discussion” (Conover et al. 2001). The result is a cycle of denied access to political conversation, which serves as a primary source of political knowledge and an important mobilizer for political engagement (Ryan 2010).

The ability to persuade within the context of political communication is also predicated on perceptions of expertise and knowledge. If the poor are believed to be less knowledgeable, they will be less effective in persuading others with regard to political issues (Ryan 2010). Because of these perceptions, they are less likely to be selected as a discussion partner and their views have less sway in political discussions. This hinders opportunities to develop political communication networks and exacerbates both perceived and actual differences in political knowledge over time (Conover et al. 2001).

## DIFFERENCES IN POLITICAL VIEWS AND PARTY AFFILIATION

The association between the Democratic Party and the working-class in the United States had been considered unbreakable since Seymour Martin Lipset’s publication of *Political Man* in 1960. Recent election results have begun to draw this association into question (Evans and Tilley 2012). In a revised edition of this seminal work, Lipset described the Democratic Party as coming to represent “two lefts”: one made up of socially liberal, white-collar professionals and the other, made up of lower wage and unionized blue-collar workers more traditionally associated with the party and its history (Lipset 1981). This trend has been documented in several Western nations, including the United States (Weakliem 1991; Caínzos and Voces 2010). In the United States, there has been a shift among

the white working-class from alliance with the Democratic Party to the Republican Party (Weakliem 1991). These patterns, however, are too complex to assume a mass exodus of the working-class from the Democratic Party. For example, there has been more shifting of white-collar professionals to the Democratic Party than members of the working-class to the Republican Party (Hout et al. 1995). Much of these shifts can be attributed to changes in the economic and social platforms of both dominant parties as well as broader economic shifts over the past several decades.

Occupation, as a marker of social class, is associated with differences in political views and voting preferences. This association has been demonstrated by the overwhelming support for Democratic candidates among blue-collar union workers (Asher et al. 2001). “With the exception of the self-employed, middle class voters supported Republican candidates while working-class voters supported the Democrats” until 1964 (Campbell et al. 1960). Since the 1960s, those with the highest education show the greatest support for the Democratic Party, illustrating the shift toward the growing support of professionals and white-collar workers (Pew Research Center 2015a).

The trend over the last 20 years has been a movement away from alignment with the two dominant parties. In fact, more Americans now identify as “independent” than Democrat or Republican (Pew Research Center 2015a). Researchers have also noted alignment shifts among social-class groups. “While class politics increasingly competes with other salient bases of electoral alignments, the class cleavage in presidential vote choice exhibits a robustness that appears likely to persist into the future” (Brooks and Manza 1997b). The reported decline in social-class voting may be more a reflection of changing measures than actual shifting alliance. Early studies used simpler measures of social class while later research introduced additional variables, more complex measures of social class, and introduced additional statistical methods that may make the results less comparable to earlier studies (Knutson 2009).

“Class still matters, but the way in which it matters in determining voting preferences has changed” (McVeigh and Sobolewski 2007). Both horizontal and vertical inequality have been shown to be associated with patterns of voting. Vertical inequality, as a measure of overall inequality, has been studied more extensively. Findings here indicate that social class is significantly associated with voting behavior, but the patterns of this association have shifted over time. As discussed above, there has been movement among the working class away toward the Republican Party

and Republican candidates. Similarly, wealthier professionals have aligned themselves in recent decades with the Democratic Party, shifting alliances from previous patterns. What remains, however, is a class-based pattern of voting for parties and candidates.

## FAMILY

Social-class background affects value transmission from parents to children, both in general and in relation to politics. Beyond transmitting preferences for supporting specific candidates and political parties, parents provide more general lessons regarding citizenship and expected levels of political behavior. Studies reviewed in the previous chapter examined how the socialization of males and females within the family contributed to divergent paths for political engagement and participation based on gender. Like gender, one's socioeconomic position impacts how a child is socialized politically within the family with regard to political attitudes and orientations, levels of knowledge and efficacy, political interest and participation (Kohn 1959, 1963; Paulsen 1991).

Politically engaged and active parents rear children who are politically active and engaged, and levels of engagement vary based on socioeconomic status (Verba et al. 2003; Mustillo et al. 2004). Lower income parents and parents with lower levels of educational attainment are less likely to be politically active and they model this for their own children. In addition, parental values differ based on social class in ways that directly and indirectly influence the potential political behavior of children. Working-class parents tend to emphasize obedience, respect for authority, compliance, and conformity while middle-class parents tend to emphasize independence, critical thinking, and innovation in their children (Kohn 1959). These two sets of emphasized values provide vastly different models for political engagement and activity (Paulsen 1991). Not only have these emphasized values remained remarkably consistent over 50 years of research, they also parallel the consistent disparity in political engagement and participation based on social class.

Parenting styles also differ between lower-income and middle-income families and these differences could impact political participation. Middle-class parents engage in what has been termed "concerted cultivation," a model emphasizing direct emotional, time, and intellectual investment in children (Lareau 2011). The "accomplishment of natural growth," a model more commonly found among working- and lower-class families,

provides more freedom for children to explore on their own with less direct parental involvement or management. Each of these parenting models, “shaped by class contexts contribute to the reproduction of social inequalities,” results in different outcomes with regard to political engagement and participation (Irwin and Elley 2011). Middle-class children, because of higher levels of direct involvement and investment, are more likely to develop the valuable social and educational capital for higher levels of political efficacy and knowledge that are correlated with political engagement and participation (Paulsen 1991).

The impacts of family social-class background are reflected in patterns of volunteering and political participation among adults (Smith 1994; Mustillo et al. 2004). Childhood household income is an important predictor of the likelihood that a person will make a campaign contribution as an adult (Verba et al. 2003). Individuals with higher educational attainment, income levels, and occupational prestige also report higher levels of voluntarism (Smith 1994). It appears then that attitudes toward and participation in voluntary activities are transmitted from generation to generation. Middle-class daughters are more likely to volunteer as youth and to continue to volunteer as adults than working-class daughters. This is likely due to both the transmission of values and beliefs about civic participation (Beck and Jennings 1982; Janoski et al. 1998) and to the greater “access to social, cultural, and economic resources and positions” afforded to children from wealthier families (Moen et al. 1997).

## SCHOOL

Schools and school systems reflect the larger system of social class stratification. Because the primary source of funding for public schools is property taxes, schools in poorer neighborhoods receive less revenue than do wealthier ones. Researchers have documented how these extreme disparities result in vast differences in the physical condition of schools, the availability of up-to-date equipment, curriculum, and resources, and the recruitment and retention of quality teachers and staff in rich and poor communities.

These disparities also result in different models for political socialization (Litt 1963). The values emphasized by working-class parents are reflected in working-class schools. Teachers in working-class schools emphasize citizen passivity and a consensus view of the political realm (Paulsen 1991). The civic education curriculum of working-class schools also places less

emphasis on political process and active citizen participation (Litt 1963). In the end, working-class students exhibit lower levels of political efficacy than their wealthier counterparts (Paulsen 1991). The conclusion, then, is that “the political socialization in the school system is a direct reflection of the community.”

While primary and secondary education may provide limited opportunities to overcome social-class barriers with regard to political engagement, higher education is positively associated with political engagement and activity. In fact, education appears to be more important than other factors, such as socioeconomic status, in determining political engagement (Converse 1972; Verba et al. 1995; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). Higher education creates opportunities for political learning, both within and outside of the classroom. In addition, colleges and universities can “function as gateways to advantages, social networks, occupational groups and residential locations” (Soss and Jacobs 2009).

It may not be simply that a college education increases political participation among college students and college graduates. The curricular content of an individual’s educational experiences may also play a role. Research has found that enrollment in “civics”-related and social sciences courses is positively associated with political engagement (Hillygus 2005; Niemi and Junn 1998). Exposure to such courses is argued to deepen understanding of government, the political process, and encourage participation. This exposure seems to be of particular importance for lower income students, who come into the schools less politically aware and with lower levels of political knowledge (van Deth et al. 2011; Stolte Heiskanen 1971).

## WORKPLACE

Because occupation is often used as an indicator or a component in a composite measure of social class, it is difficult to discuss the role of the workplace independently of broader social class influences (Zipp and Smith 1982). Distinctions made between blue-collar and white-collar occupations, for example, are class distinctions, reflecting different educational and training requirements, workplace conditions, and remuneration. Even given these conceptual obstacles, occupation clearly is linked to political engagement and participation.

Occupational classification is associated with different levels and forms of volunteerism (Rotolo and Wilson 2006). For example, public-sector



workers are both more likely to volunteer and spend more hours in volunteer work than private sector workers. The types of volunteering vary as well, with blue-collar workers volunteering primarily within organizations related to their work. Public-sector workers vote at higher levels as well, but this is viewed largely as a reflection of the political nature of their work (Rosenfeld 2010; Kerrissey and Schofer 2013).

The conditions of work may also contribute to the likelihood of political participation. According to the “spillover” hypothesis, work experiences can foster political participation or non-participation (Greenberg et al. 1996). Social and civic skills acquired on the job can be applied to the realm of politics. An employee who holds a position in which they have some control over decision making is more likely to be politically active. This is due in part because these types of work experiences foster self-efficacy, which increases political participation (Elden 1981).

The workplace is also a central location for political communication and the accumulation of political knowledge (Brady et al. 1995). In addition to spouses and other relatives, co-workers are a primary source for political communication (Huckfeldt et al. 1995). While family members are more likely to hold similar political views, co-workers offer divergent political views that foster political discussion and political tolerance (Mutz and Mondak 2006).

## VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS

Lower- and working-class employees are less likely to be involved in voluntary associations (Petev 2013). Voluntary associations and voluntary organizations can be classified on the basis of the goals of the group and the motivations of its members (Janoski and Wilson 1995). Community-oriented groups are those whose activities are externally focused on improving the community or general welfare. Self-oriented groups include groups whose actions serve to “protect benefits [and] further business or occupational interests.” Parental income and education levels are significant predictors of a student’s participation in self-oriented associations. “Membership in this type of organization is a form of social capital more likely to be possessed (and passed on) by the wealthy and highly educated.” Sector of the economy is also associated with membership and participation in organizations. Unskilled, service, and skilled workers socialize more frequently with family members and community members while professional and managerial workers report more frequent socialization with

a wide variety of formal groups. This lack of formal memberships among the working and lower classes limits access to social networks “associated with high economic and cultural capital.”

As noted, union membership appears to be the exception with regard to membership and participation for the working-class. Unionization has a positive effect on voter turnout (Leighley and Nagler 2007) and on participation in politics more generally (Kerrissey and Schofer 2013). Unions expend great effort to mobilize their members politically, to share information, and to organize its members for collective action. “Unions are very explicit in their efforts to cultivate political participation among the working class and those that lack civic skills.” Because participation among the more affluent and more highly educated is already high relative to those with lower incomes and less education, the efforts of unions to inform and train their members can have a profound effect on the political participation for these less advantaged groups. Further, the decline of unions in the United States is particularly important with regard to how it may affect future levels of political participation among those groups least likely to be politically active (Gray and Caul 2000; Leighley and Nagler 2007). The composition of unions has changed significantly over the last four decades as well, with a loss of unionized blue-collar and manufacturing jobs and a concomitant growth of white-collar, public-sector unions.

Unionization rates have declined overall in the United States and existing research indicates that US voter turnout has declined as union membership has declined (Gray and Caul 2000; Griffin et al. 1990). Despite the shifts in who belongs to unions and the decline in unionization, “unions still act as important mobilizers” in the United States (Gray and Caul 2000).

## CHURCH

“Religious institutions typically supply their members with social and civic skills, and often a worldview that motivates them to engage the political or civic spheres, that increase their civic and political participation” (Wilcox et al. 2012). For example, research has examined the role of churches in organizing African American members during the twentieth century (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990). In the United States, the church has been central to social movements, community organizing, volunteering and charity work, and social justice work at the local, state, federal, and global levels (Guo et al. 2013). For disadvantaged and disenfranchised groups,

the church is an important source of social capital for its members, providing access to social networks and civic participation (Verba et al. 1995).

While America remains among the most religious nations in the world, religious attendance and organizational affiliation with religious institutions are on the decline (Hout and Fischer 2002). While demographic shifts and the growth of secularization explain some of this trend, the shift away from organized religion has also been linked to growing discontent with the politics of the church (168). Moderates and liberals are increasingly more likely than conservatives to identify “no religious preference” when polled. For these respondents, having no religious preference is not always a rejection of the tenets of religious faith. Studies indicate that most of these respondents are “believers” who simply do not identify with a formal denomination or faith tradition. The percentage of Americans who believe that the church and its leaders should not be involved in political decision making or push a political agenda is growing. This view is contributing to disenchantment with religious institutions among younger and more liberal citizens. Given the role of the church in moral and ethical socialization, this shift away from mainstream religious organizations could have long-term consequences on the political socialization of future generations.

Religious membership and attendance is economically stratified in the United States and the relationship between social class and religious participation has been studied for more than a century (Boisen 1916; Mather 1941; Goode 1966). Studies have found that while wealthier and more educated Americans attended church at higher rates, attendance rates remained strong at all socioeconomic levels until the late twentieth century (Lazerwitz 1961; Schwadel et al. 2009; Goode 1966). More recent research has found a steeper decline in attendance among working- and lower-class Americans. In explaining this decline, researchers have pointed to the changing structure of the family and the economy (Wilcox et al. 2012). The drop in the marriage rate and the rise of cohabitation has placed young adults at odds with church doctrine. In addition, economic stagnation and increasing economic inequality has exacerbated the disparity in religious attendance between the wealthy and non-wealthy. An alternate explanation sees the lower level of religious attendance and participation as the consequence of the overall lower rates of participation in voluntary and other associations among the working and lower classes (Goode 1966; Petev 2013).

## MASS MEDIA

As noted in previous chapters, both traditional and emerging media have the potential to socialize citizens about politics and political issues. Media also serve to encourage or discourage political participation and engagement among citizens (Krueger 2002). Compared to traditional one-direction media (newspapers, magazines, radio, television) where consumers receive information about political issues from experts, politicians, and media personnel, the internet creates a two-directional conduit and opens new opportunities for the creation and sharing of political information among citizens. It also has the potential to diminish inequalities in political knowledge, engagement, and participation by removing the hierarchical structures present in traditional media. This potential has remained largely unrealized. Continued scholarship on the “digital divide” indicates that access and use of the internet remains highly stratified by age, education, race, and income (Perrin and Duggan 2015). Rather than being an equalizer, online political participation tends to mirror existing disparities found in other forms of participation (Oser et al. 2012). Online political activity also does not appear to be replacing more traditional forms of political participation. Researchers using Pew Research Center data indicated that “online and offline activity are associated with one another” (Schlozman et al. 2010). Individuals who reported online political activity also reported engaging in “offline” political activities. For example, one study found that among those who used Twitter® to share political information, about four 2011 gubernatorial races were predominantly “white, middle-aged, college educated” males, the same population that is privileged with regard to political conversations in other research (Bekafigo and McBride 2013).

## SOCIAL CLASS AND POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION OVER THE LIFE COURSE

The life course model of political socialization developed in this book depicts the political orientations of a citizen at a given point in historical time as a reflection of their level of maturation, social identities, present exposure to and processing of politically relevant messages, and ongoing personal experiences as well as some beliefs, values, identities, and behavioral dispositions acquired earlier in their personal history. The studies

reviewed in the chapter focused on the particular role of social class in shaping each of these variables.

Beginning in the family, children from different social classes are taught to value and emphasize different types of behaviors by their parents. As they enter schools, they receive divergent messages in the formal and informal curriculum about political processes and citizen participation. While colleges and universities encourage broad political and civic engagement through social science courses and extracurricular opportunities, inequality in access to higher education limits the availability of these socializing messages for lower- and working-class students. As young adults enter the workforce, the workplace can become an important location for political socialization, but the type of work strongly influences the messages received. In addition, conversations with co-workers are an important source for divergent viewpoints about political issues, introducing alternative perspectives and new information.

Memberships in voluntary associations, churches, and religious organizations provide opportunities for collective action and reinforce attitudes which encourage political engagement and participation. Lower levels of participation in these types of associations among the working class and poor result in fewer opportunities to discuss political issues, develop a sense of political efficacy, and engage in political action. The declining role of labor unions in the United States, a central location for political discussion and political action, deepens these existing class disparities.

### THE CONTINUING SIGNIFICANCE OF SOCIAL CLASS IN POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION

There is some evidence that social class may be lessening in importance with regard to the distribution of political views and in predicting political behavior. Long-term patterns of partisanship and party affiliation based on social classes are shifting. Debates about voter de-alignment and realignment emphasize the growth of “Independent” voters and the movement of blue-collar workers to the Republican Party in recent years. Scholars also point to growing emphasis on social, cultural, and moral issues over economic issues as one reason for changes in party identification among some voters.

In spite of shifts in party affiliation and partisanship, we continue to see wide disparities in knowledge, efficacy, and participation between social

classes. Social class continues to play a pivotal role in the formation of attitudes and behaviors with regard to political engagement and participation. Wealthier individuals and individuals with more education are more likely to vote. They donate more money to parties, candidates, and political causes. They are more likely to volunteer for a candidate or campaign and attend a rally or event. They talk more about politics to others and are assumed to be more knowledgeable when they discuss political issues. They are more likely to participate in organizations and associations that are either directly or indirectly related to political issues. As a result, politicians and office holders appear to be more responsive to their needs, in part because they are more visible.

Middle- and upper-class Americans also transmit these values of political engagement and participation to their children (Beck and Jennings 1991). They talk about political issues more with their children and provide more opportunities for community and civic engagement at a young age (Mustillo et al. 2004). These messages are reinforced in their schools, churches, and communities as well. The result is the reproduction of participatory inequality on the basis of social class from one generation to another.

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PART III

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Illustrating and Modifying Political  
Socialization

## Two Hypothetical Citizens

The following chapter depicts the process of political socialization through the life courses of two fictional citizens. They were born 24 years apart, attained different levels of maturation, and had dissimilar social experiences as a result of their divergent social identities. In each story, the operation of the various agents of political socialization at various periods in the life course, and in distinct historical situations is suggested as are the operations of the *primary*, *impressionable years*, and *structuring* principles.

### SAM EVANS

#### *Childhood*

Sam was born on July 23, 1936 in San Francisco to Mark and Sun Evans. Mark grew up in an upper-middle-class family in San Diego. Sun was born into a prosperous Japanese family that immigrated to America shortly before her birth. Both of Sam's parents were graduates of the University of San Francisco.

At the time of Sam's birth, Mark was an executive in a shipping firm and Sun worked as a secretary in an insurance agency. Sun did not work during Sam's early childhood. She returned to work and established her own agency when Sam entered fifth grade. Both parents continued their

careers until their retirements in 1971, at which time they moved to South Carolina, where they lived the rest of their lives.

Sam grew up as an only child in a stable, middle-class family in which politics was a frequent topic of discussion. His father followed the news closely (Hess and Torney 1967). Sam's earliest awareness of politics involved his parents' conversations about President Franklin Roosevelt. He learned that they disliked Roosevelt and, in talking about him, referred much more favorably to other people such as Wendell Willkie and Thomas Dewey. He was told that the President was a Democrat and that Willkie and Dewey were Republicans. However, it was years later until he had some understanding of the nature of political parties (Greenstein 1965). He did remember that, many times, his father had angrily referred to the longshoremen's strikes that had occurred in San Francisco in 1934 and quickly traveled up 2000 miles of the Pacific coastline. He blamed Democrats for their occurrences.

The outbreak of the Second World War brought much change to the Evans family. In February, 1942, President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066 authorizing the interment of those with "foreign enemy ancestry" in camps prepared for this purpose. Sam's maternal grandparents were among the 110,000 Japanese relocated to the camps. Sam's mother, married to an influential businessman, managed to avoid incarceration. Sam's family would never forgive Roosevelt or his political party for this act.

When he was in second grade, Sam joined a Cub Scout troop sponsored by his church and, a few years later, a youth league baseball team.<sup>1</sup> His experiences were not always positive. In San Francisco, as elsewhere in America in the 1940s, it was unlikely that any child with a Japanese parent would not encounter some peer rejection. Sam was bullied by other boys on his baseball team so much that his father eventually withdrew him. His Cub Scout troop was slightly less xenophobic, perhaps because he also went to church with these boys, but he still felt like an outsider. Sam's experiences of discrimination affected his subsequent understanding of fairness and community. These experiences also reduced his association with other children from a similar sociopolitical background.

His early perceptions of other political aspects of his life, such as power, partisanship, and authority were more directly attributable to his experiences within his family. Mark was decidedly conservative, considered himself a loyal American citizen, ran an authoritarian household, and exerted a considerable control over Sam while he was growing up. His status as



head of the household went uncontested by Sun, and they both shared a Republican identity, which they imparted to their son. In addition, Sun harbored bitter feelings about Franklin Roosevelt's establishment of the internment camps, and expressed to Sam concerns that the government could become dangerous if allowed to accumulate too much power. Sam, like many other Japanese Americans at that time, grew up with an awareness of discrimination and persecution, both *de jure* and *de facto*.

### *Adolescence*

In high school, Sam developed impressive writing skills and joined the staff of the school newspaper. For Sam, the social atmosphere of his new school was all too familiar, although the discrimination he faced was somewhat more subtle. He did find it easier to make friends and became involved in several extracurricular activities, including baseball and the yearbook committee in addition to the school newspaper. In his senior year, Sam became editor of the paper.

During his junior year, Sam was enrolled in a civics course that emphasized in-class discussions and the development of critical and problem-solving skills. Classroom activities included considering policy options for dealing with current social issues, researching the positions of candidates in various past elections, and holding formal debates. The class used news media in lessons and projects. As a result, Sam's interest in and understanding of politics temporarily increased (Galston 2001). The class encouraged Sam to discuss politics with his peers and with his parents (Simon and Merrill 1998).

In the civics class there were lessons on the recent presidential contest between Dwight Eisenhower and Adlai Stevenson. Their focus was not on the two individual candidates but rather on the different ideological perspectives their parties represented. In particular, there was explanation of the contrast between favoring the "free market system" and supporting government price and wage controls and inclusion in labor disputes. Sam now had some understanding of what he could remember of his parents' conversations about their opposition to Franklin Roosevelt and the Democratic Party. He began to re-evaluate some of his previously unquestioned views. The prevalence of his parents' perspective declined as the school and other agents of socialization began to exert their influence (Achen 2002).

As Sam's opinions began to diverge from those of his parents, so also did his interest in political participation. Hearing one set of opinions at home and another at school, Sam began to question previously established viewpoints. When he brought up questions at home, though, Mark refused to engage in any sort of discussion, and instead told Sam that his questions were the result of youthful ignorance or the toxic influence of biased media. Lacking a supportive and open-minded platform for political discussion at home, Sam eventually lost interest in politics during his final semesters in high school. To the extent that he thought about politics, he was more interested in the structure and functioning of the political system than with choosing an ideological camp.

### *Young Adulthood*

After graduating from high school in 1954, Sam attended the University of California-Berkeley to pursue a degree in journalism. His choice to study journalism went against his father's wishes but, after a difficult period of several months, Sun managed to soften Mark's resistance to the idea of Sam pursuing his own aspirations. Nevertheless, Mark would remain displeased about his son's decision.

Sam's new political environment was considerably different from the Republican culture of his family. In the midst of the "McCarthy Era" of the early 1950s, the regents of the University of California system banned communist speakers as well as many forms of political speech and organizations from their campuses. Sam arrived on the Berkeley campus in the fall of 1954, the year of the Supreme Court's desegregation decision. He soon joined the staff of the University's newspaper, *The Daily Californian*. Virtually all of senior staff of the paper viewed the University's regulations that limited free speech and prohibited political activity as a violation of their constitutional rights. They saw the ban as a replication of the restrictions placed on African Americans in the South. In their conversations and in the articles they authored, they urged their classmates to imitate the civil rights moment's mobilization, organization, and use of nonviolent direct action to change the policies imposed by the University.

Impressed by conversations and meetings with his many new friends, Sam became a supporter of and participant in student protest. Some of his surge in political activity also stemmed from his experience of an unprecedented level of inclusion. For the first time, Sam did not have to face exclusion for his ethnic background. This was due to both the more tolerant

atmosphere of Berkeley, and to Sam's understated Asian racial features, which allowed him to "pass" as White unless he chose to reveal his mixed parentage. Several years later, the continuing collective activity would evolve in Berkeley's "Free Speech Movement" and subsequently spread to campuses across the country as the "Student Movement" (Altbach 1974; Lipset and Wolin 1965). Sam's political perspective had been transformed into the polar opposite of his father's (Jennings 2002; Torney-Puta 2004).

During a rare visit to Berkeley, Mark expressed dismay at his son's choices of friends, career, and ideological path. Mark accused Sam of being a Communist and threatened to withdraw financial support for his education. Eventually Sun calmed Mark down, but the outburst further alienated Sam from his father's way of looking at the world. For most of his educational career, Mark and Sun did not visit their son at school, and he rarely shared personal details of his life with them. It was over a decade before this chilly relationship improved.

Sam graduated from UC Berkeley in 1958 and was admitted to the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University in New York City. Although, like Berkeley, there was considerable student political activity on the Columbia campus, Sam's time was taken up by his graduate studies and earning money for his expenses by writing for a weekly New York City restaurant and entertainment guide. Sam became less politically active, more pragmatic, and more tempered in his political radicalism (Nassi and Abramowitz 1979).

After several months on the job, Sam was assigned to profile Rochelle Paquet, a young graduate of the Culinary Institute of America, who was drawing considerable attention as the *saucier* at *Chez Clément*, a fashionable, and increasingly popular Manhattan restaurant. They became a couple, and, after a year, they found an apartment. Despite the opposition of their parents, they moved in together. Two years later, they married.

Similarity of their social and political views accounted for some of Sam and Rochelle's mutual attraction (Buss et al. 2001). They had come to their shared perspective following different paths. Sam had earlier rejected his parents' decidedly conservative political and social outlook, a rejection strongly reinforced and increased by his experiences at Berkeley. Rochelle's political orientation largely reflected that of her middle-class Catholic parents.

There were some differences. Sam was particularly concerned with free speech issues, civil rights, and the role of America's corporations and military in international affairs. Rochelle tended to focus on economic

inequality and the provision of various social services. Over time their mutual socialization produced greater similarity in their political outlooks (Niemi et al. 1977; Weiner 1978). Overall, Sam appeared to exert more influence on Rochelle, moving her politics further to the ideological left (Jennings and Stoker 2001).

Sam received a Master of Arts in Journalism degree from Columbia in 1960 and accepted an entry-level position at *Newsday*, a daily newspaper serving New York's Nassau and Suffolk counties and the New York City borough of Queens. Rochelle continued working as a *saucier* and was assigned increasing responsibilities. While Rochelle did not discuss politics with her co-workers, Sam participated in endless political conversations at the newspaper. These focused on the rising Cold War tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union, civil rights, and the 1960 presidential campaign. His colleagues tended to share his liberal perspective and his enthusiastic support for the candidacy of John F. Kennedy (Johnstone et al. 1976; Weaver and Wilhoit 1968).

The political drama of the early 1960s enlivened Sam and Rochelle's conversations at home and further unified their political perspectives. They talked about the presidential campaign with their friends and attended a large Kennedy political rally at Madison Square Garden. However, with the exception of voting, this was the full extent of their political participation.

The publication of Rachel Carson's *The Silent Spring* in 1962 called attention to the serious health consequences of uncontrolled pesticide use on animals, birds, and humans. The following year saw the publication of *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan (1963). The book focused attention on the malaise of White, middle-class women created by the cultural assumption that fulfillment for women could be found primarily in marriage and being a housewife. Both Sam and Rochelle read the books. Rochelle was particularly impressed by their theses and became much more attentive to environmental and gender issues. While Sam was sympathetic to the positions taken in each of the books, he remained engaged with matters of free speech, civil rights, and the role of the military.

Both Sam and Rochelle were involved in the 1964 presidential campaign. They volunteered at their precinct's Democratic Party headquarters to work for the election of Lyndon Johnson. Their active support for Johnson's candidacy was based on his advocacy of implementing and expanding the civil rights legislation initiated by John Kennedy, for his social policies which would expand the role of government to health care and environmental protection, and for his proposed "war on poverty"

which would, Johnson claimed, ensure a minimum standard of living for all Americans. Sam's enthusiasm was also fueled by his disdain for Johnson's Republican opponent, Barry Goldwater, whom he saw as a radical reactionary. In particular, he was angered by Goldwater's opposition to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as an intrusion of the federal government into the affairs of the states, and his advocacy of international policies which, Sam believed, would provoke a nuclear war between the United States and the Soviet Union.

### *Adulthood*

In 1967, Sam and Rochelle bought a home in Melville, New York and commuted to the city. They had a son whom they named, Jacob. Rochelle decided to take some time off from work until her son was two years old. She had reached an agreement with the owner of *Chez Clément* that, after two years, she would return to work. Rochelle had found her career fulfilling. All of the new friends she had made in her new neighborhood either worked as professionals or had left careers to take up full-time parenting. Rochelle discovered she could much more easily identify with those who were working. This recognition, and her re-reading of the *Feminine Mystique*, reinforced her decision to resume her career. She had become something of a feminist. Two years after her return to work, she became a *sous-chef de cuisine* at an improved salary.

After Jacob's birth, Mark showed some interest in Sam's life. He and Sun came to visit them in their new home. From that time on, Sam's parents would come to New York several times a year. During these visits, Mark, Sun, Sam, and Rochelle avoided any discussion of political topics. Sam was disturbed that, while he was able to have informed, good-natured political discussions with his Republican friends, this was not possible with his father.

Sam escaped the draft, which had taken several of his friends. He became active in the anti-war movement. His opposition to the war was not based on self-interest, but upon his attitude toward various political symbols associated with the war such as "communism," "liberalism/conservatism," "the military," and "government" (Lau et al. 1978).

The 1968 presidential campaign did little to excite Sam's political interest. However, 1972 was a different matter. Democratic candidate George McGovern supported an entire set of policies that, at the time, Sam believed were essential to the well-being of the nation: withdrawing troops

from Vietnam, granting amnesty to draft evaders who had left the country, vastly reducing military spending, and passing a constitutional amendment that would guarantee equal rights for men and women throughout the United States—the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). These views were shared by Rochelle and by his friends at the newspaper. Sam did not participate in McGovern’s campaign, as he was busy with responsibilities at work and home, but he did vote. He was very disappointed when McGovern was beaten by Richard Nixon.

Sam’s lack of enthusiasm for a Nixon presidency turned into chagrin in 1972. Investigating a break-in at the Democratic National headquarters at the Watergate office complex in Washington, D.C., *Washington Post* reporters uncovered a link to the Committee for the Re-election of the President, the official organization at the Nixon campaign. The illegal activity was found to involve abuse of power by the Nixon administration and ultimately led to President Nixon’s resignation. The event strengthened Sam’s political partisanship. It also impacted his workplace. At the newspaper, there was an increased emphasis on investigative reporting and reporter training. This included filing Freedom of Information Act requests, using databases, working undercover, and avoiding libel suits (Feldstein 2004; Hawkins et al. 1975).

In the early 1970s, Sam wrote a series of articles about housing discrimination and political corruption in Nassau County. Although he considered them politically bland, the articles were commended by his editors. In his spare time, he began writing a science fiction novel, which depicted a dystopian future in the spirit of Aldous Huxley’s 1932 classic, *Brave New World*. Sam found a publisher, but the book received little recognition and did not sell well.

In 1975, the Vietnam War ended, and the American troops stationed in Vietnam returned home. There were few resources available for them upon their return and great public antipathy for the war, which was projected onto the returning troops. Sam saw many homeless and destitute veterans in the months and years to come, and this solidified both his anti-war sentiments and his convictions regarding the importance of social programs (Marwell et al. 1987). He wrote articles about the lack of support for the returning soldiers, condemning the nation’s abandonment of them and reminding readers that many of these men had been drafted in the first place. These articles served to alienate him from a portion of his readership who held the soldiers responsible for the atrocities committed in

Vietnam. Sam experienced a dip in popularity which temporarily silenced him on the subject of veterans' affairs.

As Sam and Rochelle's son Jacob began to form his own political opinions, he increasingly engaged in conversations with his parents about politics (Simon and Merrill 1998). These conversations often resulted in all parties coming away with different attitudes about the topics discussed. Sam and Rochelle were both politically interested parents, sharing the same political perspectives and possessing a high degree of political information and understanding (Jennings and Stoker 2001). They socialized their son to pay attention to politics, participate politically, and carefully consider multiple aspects of political situations.

While his literary effort had been far from successful, Sam continued to work on novels in his spare time. Ben Bagdikian's *The Media Monopoly*, published in 1983, coupled with his personal observations at work, prompted him to write a story depicting professional life at a daily newspaper. These included the presentation of news as a series of isolated acts devoid of political and social meaning, heavily weighted in support of corporate values. The second novel sold well, and was mentioned favorably in *The New York Times*. It did not make Sam popular in his home town of Melville, which was the corporate headquarters of *Newsday*. However, he did receive praise from many friends and some of the colleagues with whom he worked most closely.

The 1980s were a tumultuous time for the United States, and Sam was there to chronicle it. He observed the effects of President Ronald Reagan's economic policies from a distance, as a man comfortably ensconced in middle-class America. Though he did not directly experience the economic impact of the cuts in social spending, he saw the number of homeless people on the streets of New York City rise, and read his colleagues' articles about the increase in police brutality against the poor in New York. Also during this time, Sam wrote one of the earliest reports about the mysterious new virus which was predominantly killing gay men. He advocated for equal rights for the men and women suffering from Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).

In 1983, Mark Evans met with a serious car accident. Four months later, he developed pneumonia, passing away shortly after at the age of 72. Sam regretted the long period of time during which he and his father had not been on good terms. In retrospect, he felt that differences of opinion were a weak reason to cut ties with loved ones, and was saddened by the thought that he and his father had been estranged for nearly a decade

between college and Jacob's birth. This caused Sam's political feelings to become less entrenched, as he developed an increased willingness to consider and respect the positions of those with differing viewpoints.

Sam's mother, Sun, was beginning to suffer Alzheimer's disease, and without her husband to help with her care, she came to live with Sam and Rochelle for a period of time. As the disease progressed, Sam made the difficult decision to move his mother to an assisted living home in Melville. At the time, there were few support groups in New York for adult children of those with Alzheimer's. Sam and Rochelle struggled as they watched Sun's condition deteriorate. During this time, Sam's political engagement, already ebbing, almost ceased. He was dismayed at the lack of legislation and infrastructure to provide for elderly adults, but had neither the time nor the energy to pursue change.

Jacob graduated in 1985 and went to college at Columbia University. He followed in his father's footsteps, majoring in journalism. Sam was determined to provide more encouragement and support for his son's career choice than his father had shown for him. As Sam watched his son grow up, he remembered his own dysfunctional relationship with his father, and was grateful both for his positive relationship with his son, and for the fact that his son and he shared similar political leanings, decreasing the potential for conflict and divisive conversation.

Having become a relatively well-known author, Sam joined a group of writers whom he met through his publisher. The group would sometimes discuss political events. Some of his fellow authors shared his enthusiasm for politics and, as a general rule, were also left-leaning. Sam's conversations both reinforced and enriched his political opinions (Verbrugge 1977; Marsden 1987). Through his writers' group, he became involved in the National Coalition Against Censorship and the American Booksellers' Foundation for Free Expression. Sam attended some of the functions they sponsored and gave them substantial monetary contributions. Freedom of expression had long been an important issue for him, stemming from his early experience with writing as the medium that freed him from an oppressive social environment (Alwin and Kronsnick 1991; Sears and Funk 1999).

In 1989, Sam and Rochelle watched the NBC live broadcast of the fall of the Berlin Wall, and hoped that a new era of peace was beginning. The following year, Operation Desert Storm began, and Sam wrote strident criticisms of the United States' involvement in the conflict of Kuwait. That year, Jacob graduated from Columbia with a degree in journalism, and



began working for CNN as a journalist. He showed an immediate interest in traveling to foreign countries, as well as a willingness to go to dangerous sites. Sam and Rochelle were extremely worried for their son's safety, and began paying more attention to the political, military, and social situations in the countries to which he was sent. Sam, who had focused primarily on domestic political issues for the past decade, showed renewed interest in international politics and America's military involvement.

### *Later Adulthood*

Through the 1990s, Sam's political attitudes, which had changed little since his days at Berkeley, remained stable, although his attitude toward the opposing party had become more tolerant since his father's death. In 1992, Jacob began covering the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Sam and Rochelle both paid considerable attention to the news about that war. Sam's writing began to focus more on the conflict, as his son's safety in the region was never far from his mind. Other than an increase in anti-war articles, however, Sam's political activity during this time involved little more than voting. He and Rochelle were both working full-time, and Sam's mother's health was rapidly deteriorating. Sam struggled with the stress of meeting his professional obligations as well as making arrangements for his mother's support and end-of-life care. Sun passed away in 1994 at the age of 81, from complications due to Alzheimer's disease.

In 2000, Sam and Rochelle both actively campaigned for Al Gore (Stoker and Jennings 1995). Sam also joined an organization devoted to reducing corruption and big business influence in government. For the first time in over 40 years, he took the opportunity to become more politically engaged. He assumed a position of leadership, and became secretary of the local chapter of the organization he had joined.

On September 11, 2001, Sam and Rochelle were taking a walk at a park in downtown Melville when they heard emergency sirens begin to sound. Both of the suburb's fire trucks and most of its squad cars raced toward New York City. A few minutes later, they saw people rushing toward the television broadcasting the news in the window of an electronics store. Curious to see what was going on, they walked over and saw some of the first footage of the Twin Towers in flames. The rest of the day was spent glued to the television. Sam worried that these attacks were only the first of many, and that the United States would once again commit itself to a long and bloody war on foreign soil.

As Sam had anticipated, on September 20, 2001, President George W. Bush announced his intent to wage a “War on Terror.” By October, the United States was bombing Afghanistan. President Bush’s Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, implicated Iraq’s leader Saddam Hussein in the attacks, resulting in war being waged in Iraq as well. Sam felt that the hostilities were premature, ill-planned, and likely to result in many more attacks around the world.

In October 2001, in an attempt to address concern for national security, the “Patriot Act” was signed into law. Among its provisions were those permitting the FBI to obtain private information about citizens without a warrant or due process. This included searching telephone, email, business, financial, and library records. Sam was reminded of the “witch hunts” against suspected communists in the 1950s in which the government blacklisted many celebrities and civilians because of their past or present political ideology. He was particularly concerned with the Act’s potential impact on journalists’ freedom of expression and their ability to deal with confidential information.

Jacob was sent to Iraq in 2003 to cover the military operations and the fallout for civilians. In July 2004, an IED exploded near the jeep that he and his colleagues were driving. Jacob was wounded in the shoulder, and survived after a short hospital stay. He recuperated at home with his parents for several months. During that time, Sam and Rochelle noticed that he seemed to be struggling. He often had nightmares and was very sensitive to loud noises and sudden movements. Jacob often complained that he couldn’t get the memories out of his head, and that they were playing on a constant loop. Sam encouraged him to see a therapist, who diagnosed him with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Sam and Rochelle had heard of PTSD and went to the library to seek detailed information. They supported their son in recovering from his experiences, and in the process, met others whose loved ones suffered from PTSD. In the years to come, as soldiers returned from their tours of duty and struggled to re-acclimate, PTSD began to feature more in national dialogue. Sam made financial contributions to the PTSD Foundation of America, and supported legislation to provide additional resources for the recovery of returning soldiers. He recalled the Vietnam veterans who had suffered decades before, and regretted that there had not been more services to help them cope with their experiences and memories.

The 2008 election was a momentous one for Sam. He participated in Barack Obama’s Change campaign, making calls and organizing

volunteers. He was particularly encouraged by Obama's promises to end the military occupation in Iraq and Afghanistan. After Obama's election, however, 17,000 more troops were sent to Afghanistan, and Sam was dismayed by the almost immediate about-face. He was skeptical of the plan to first stabilize, then withdraw. Plans for a draw-down of US forces in Afghanistan beginning in 2011 were established, but Sam's faith in the administration had already been shaken by the initial influx of troops after a promised withdrawal. He still approved of Obama, but he no longer had as much confidence in the new administration.

Sam and Rochelle voted for Obama again in 2012, and were relieved when he won a second term. They supported his proposed reforms of the health care system, recalling how difficult it had been to find and afford long-term care for Sam's mother, Sun. They also noticed that, as they got older, they occasionally experienced age-related discrimination in health-care. Their insurance premium was increased due to their age, and doctors sometimes apologetically informed them that some ache or pain was simply related to "old age," rather than further investigating the source of the pain.

In 2014, Sam remained involved with the organization to address corruption in government, and began paying more attention to the extent of income inequality in the United States. He was critical of the US-led military operations overseas, but he began focusing his energy and attention on other subjects. Both Sam and Rochelle retired that year and had more time to pursue their own interests and devoted more attention to political activity and civic engagement. Their son Jacob still worked as a journalist, though he was no longer a war correspondent. From him, they developed some new perspectives on international and domestic policies. Sam, Rochelle, and Jacob developed a deep concern with congressional gridlock and had difficulty envisioning the conditions under which it might end.

## JUDITH WILLIAMS

### *Childhood*

Judith was born on January 9, 1960 to John and Wendy Williams, an African American couple living in Memphis, Tennessee during the long struggle for Black equality and civil rights.

Neither parent graduated from high school. John was a construction worker and Wendy worked as a housekeeper for several families. They lived just above the poverty line and often struggled from paycheck to paycheck. The combined influence of limited education and low income negatively affected Judith's parents' potential for political engagement.<sup>2</sup>

Judith was the oldest of three children. The Williams family lived in Orange Mound, a predominantly Black area of Memphis. The children grew up in a close-knit community in which most of the residents knew each other on a first name basis. At the time, the neighborhood boasted the largest concentration of Black citizens outside of Harlem. There were few job opportunities available in the area, few banks, and the houses and apartments were old and in varying states of despair. Crime rates were high, schools were underfunded, and the few parks in the area were poorly maintained by the city.

Race was the dominant feature of Judith's experience growing up, as it was for her family and friends (Anderson and Massey 2001). Their racial identity excluded them from most White schools and businesses, limited their opportunities for advancement, and contributed to their sense of political alienation. All those surrounding Judith, and consequently Judith herself, had little faith that White politicians, or the government generally, would represent their interests. They shared diffuse negative feelings toward the political system as well as the president and other symbols of power and authority (Jaros et al. 1968; Abramson 1972; Orum and Cohen 1973; and Jackson 1973).

Judith's father was drafted into the military in 1962 and was killed in Vietnam shortly after the 1964 Tonkin Gulf incident. In the Orange Mound community the view prevailed that the draft was discriminatory, favoring young White men from middle-class families at the expense of young men from working-class families, a disproportionate number of whom were Black. Judith's mother had learned from television news that Black enlistees were more likely to be assigned to infantry positions, which put them at a much greater risk of being killed in battle. She had heard it said in her church that Vietnam was "a white man's war, but a black man's fight" (Tucker 1998). All of this embittered Wendy and, in time, she would convey her feelings to her daughter (Lyons 1970).

After John's death, Judith and her family moved in with her maternal grandmother.

Thanks to their cohesive kinship network, John's death did not devastate the family as much as it might have. Many of Judith's friends also lived

in father-absent, multi-generational households (Bowman and Howard 1985; Chase-Lansdale et al. 1994; Deleire and Kalil 2002).

Judith's family attended the Mount Moriah Baptist Church, where the struggle for civil rights was often a topic of conversation among congregants and was mentioned occasionally in Sunday sermons. The church taught that, while leaders should be honored and obeyed, conflict could be expected to arise when the execution of authority contradicted the will of God. By tying Black struggles to religious teachings, Judith's pastor rallied his congregation's support for the Civil Rights movement. In this context, Judith developed a sense that politics could be used to advance moral and ethical ideas (Gadzekpo 1997). For the first time she felt a sense of communal political identity, and believed that her skin color might not forever bar her from having some political influence.<sup>3</sup>

Judith was raised in an insular community and had few opportunities to venture outside of her hometown while growing up. To Judith, Memphis was the center of the world. All of her family lived in Memphis, and all of the family's outings were within Memphis city limits. The Memphis she experienced outside of Orange Mound, and the society she saw depicted in the movies and on television were quite different from her everyday world. In her early years, Judith focused her attention and energy on the Black community with which she was familiar and in which she was accepted.

Despite the U.S. Supreme Court 1954 ruling in *Brown v. Board of Topeka* that segregation in public schools was unconstitutional, and the *Civil Rights Acts of 1964* banning discrimination in voting, jobs, and public accommodations, when Judith entered public school in 1966, racial desegregation was still very much an uphill battle in Tennessee.<sup>4</sup>

On April 4, 1968, civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated in Memphis. Judith's mother, grandmother, neighbors, members of her church, teachers at her school, and her classmates and friends were all seriously troubled by the killing. The event increased her awareness of politics and widened the disparity that already existed between her attitudes toward government and the views of White children of the same age and social class (Abramson 1977).

In 1969, the U.S. Supreme Court found Memphis schools had failed to obtain the objectives of civil rights legislation and ordered revision of their desegregation plan. In 1973, the Court demanded that the school system begin bussing Black students to help integrate its schools. Judith was among the first of the Black children in Memphis to be bussed to a racially integrated school in a relatively affluent, and white, East Memphis suburb.

The families of the White children who remained in the public school system after bussing began tended to be those who were racially tolerant, were financially unable to afford to send them to a private school, or both. For the first few weeks, there were parents carrying “No Bussing” signs picketing the school as busses full of Black children arrived. Judith was afraid of these angry people and feared they would become violent. After a few weeks the protesting subsided, but the initial reaction to the bussing made Judith feel unwelcome in her new school and apprehensive of her new classmates.

Judith’s earlier school years were spent in a context where the color of her skin did not determine how she was treated by her teachers or by her peers. Suddenly, her color was like a brand in the classroom. Some teachers would not call on her when she raised her hand. Some White students would not acknowledge her, as though she were invisible. Others were blatantly hostile, throwing food at her and her friends in the lunch room, calling them names, writing obscene messages on their lockers, and bullying them in other ways. Fights occasionally broke out between black and white students.

Such encounters caused Judith great distress. She begged her mother to return to her old school. However, her mother convinced her to stay strong and seize the opportunity to get the better education available at her present school. With the support of her family, Black friends at the school and her pastor, Judith became more self-confident and resilient. She also drew on her fresh memories of the 1972 campaign of Shirley Chisholm, the first Black woman to run for President of the United States. Chisholm had declared that she wanted to represent all the minority forces in America, including Blacks, women, the young, and the Spanish speaking. During her campaign, George Wallace, her political and ideological rival, was shot in an assassination attempt. While he was recovering, Chisholm visited him in the hospital. To Judith, this was a profound and compassionate gesture which made it easier for her to forgive the children who had bullied her in school. Nevertheless, the school experiences would influence her later views of social power and race relations (Scott 2003).

### *Adolescence*

Wendy Williams was a strict but supportive mother. She was less permissive than is characteristic of white middle-class mothers, though less authoritarian than is often the case with Black working-class parents. As

Judith grew older and began to develop and express her own opinions, her mother took them into consideration, but did not tolerate disobedience.<sup>5</sup> She was occasionally included in some adults' conversations about race relations. They were particularly interested in her experiences in a predominantly white school.

For both middle and high school, Judith continued to be bussed to the integrated school in East Memphis. When Judith saw that many of the white faculty and students simply assumed that she was not nearly as bright as her white classmates, she became determined to excel in school. Many of her Black peers succumbed to the effects of prejudice, and fared poorly in school. Others had unsupportive home situations and received little help or encouragement from their parents. Judith was a diligent student, and was expected to do her homework and study as soon as she got home from school. She joined the school girls' choir and library club in high school. She also actively participated in her church youth group, and was involved in community service projects such as serving Thanksgiving dinners to the poor. She even formed friendships with White classmates in choir and the library club. Engaging in these activities increased Judith's sense of integration into her community, and would have some impact on her willingness to join community and civic groups in the future (McFarland and Thomas 2006).

Judith took a required civics class in her senior year. As had long been the case, she and her classmates were presented with an uncritical, nationalistic perspective for understanding American political history, symbols, structures, and processes.<sup>6</sup> In many ways, descriptions of the American polity she encountered did not correspond to the realities of the political world she had seen playing out over the years in Memphis. She could not help but have cynical responses to her classroom materials and to the "right" answers on her examination questions concerning freedom, democracy, and equality in this country. Nevertheless, she hoped that, as a consequence of the Civil Rights movement, she might enjoy the rights of citizenship that had so long been denied to her forebears.

None of the adults in Judith's family had attended college. She had very good grades and, following the advice of her school librarian and advisor for the library club, had taken the SAT. She had been strongly urged by her mother, grandmother, and minister to continue her education. Still, without precedent, it was difficult for her to grapple with the process of applying to schools. Judith worried about the cost of college, as did her mother, but Wendy did not want to discourage her daughter. She

talked to the pastor at her church and her school counselor, who reassured her that there were scholarships available for students like Judith. She knew life in Orange Mound and heard the messages of the Civil Rights Movement. She was the oldest child in her family and wanted to be a good role model for her siblings. By the time Judith reached her senior year, she had decided she wanted to attend college and pursue a career in library administration.

Passage of Affirmative Action legislation led to a significant increase in the admission rate of Black students to colleges and universities nationwide. With the help of the school librarian, Judith reviewed materials on schools in Tennessee and nearby states, focusing her attention on their library science programs. However, her first consideration was cost and the availability of scholarships and grants.

A month after submitting applications, Judith began receiving letters of acceptance. The school she most eagerly awaited did not disappoint her. Judith received her letter of admission to Indiana University in October, 1977. To the relief of both Judith and her mother, she received a Basic Education Opportunity Grant (now known as a Pell Grant) and, subsequently, a need-based scholarship available as part of a program to increase the participation of women and minorities on the IU campus.

After so many years of cynicism, Judith began to hope that, with legislation such as Affirmative Action now enacted, the color of her skin might not bar her from advancing. She started to believe in the potential of the government to represent the interests of all its citizens, not just those who happened to be rich and White. This increased her confidence in the government and her expectations of more positive advancements to come, although she remembered how hard her community had had to fight for inclusion.

### *Young Adulthood*

When she entered in the Fall of 1978, Judith found few Black students at IU. For the first few months, she struggled with homesickness and a sense of social isolation. However, there was a Black Cultural Center (BCC) on campus. This provided a setting in which she felt she could form friendships more easily and share experiences. She was friendly with some White students in her classes, but the relationships usually ended with the semester.



During most of her first year, Judith had few political discussions in her classes, at the BCC or elsewhere on campus. She was aware of IU's reputation as a liberal campus, and generally found it a congenial political environment. However, politics were a minor concern. Classes, studying, and work she had found in her dormitory's dining hall consumed most of her time.

Judith's interest in politics increased as the 1980 presidential election approached. She learned from the media, from discussions in her dormitory and in the BCC that Republican candidate Ronald Reagan supported state's rights and opposed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, saying it was "humiliating to the South." He was also critical of 1965 Voting Rights Act and the 1968 Fair Housing Act. Judith believed that each of these positions was antithetical to the interest of African Americans. Along with all of her friends, and undoubtedly her family as well, she supported the Democratic presidential candidate Jimmy Carter.<sup>7</sup> She was disappointed with the results of the election, and feared that Reagan and the new Republican congressional majority would reverse what she saw as the political progress of recent years. She began to reassess her optimistic views about the government and about the future of social power and race relations in America.

In her sophomore year, Judith joined the school's library club. The club discussed job options for librarians, political policies which affected libraries and librarians, and technological advances in computing which were likely to change ways in which data in libraries were stored. The club taught her to pay attention to specific political actions which might affect her job prospects and financial future, and to understand the implications of different policies for her professional career. Judith began to think about what sort of librarian she might like to be, and was looking into applying to graduate school to get her Masters in Library Science degree.

All of this changed in the semester when Judith discovered she was pregnant by a student she had met shortly after she arrived at IU. Soon after learning of her pregnancy, they parted company. Judith considered getting an abortion. With the availability of Planned Parenthood clinics and the passage of *Roe v. Wade*, in 1973, Judith did have this alternative to motherhood. However, she had been raised to believe this was a sinful practice (Evans 2002). Judith determined she would remain in school until the end of the semester and then return to Memphis to have her child. Her mother offered as much help as she could for as long as Judith would remain with her. She also knew she would find additional support

from her two siblings and from her closest friends who remained in the Orange Mound community.

Judith decided that she would spend the summer and the following fall in Memphis and return to IU at the beginning of the second semester. She contacted several university offices and the Department of Family and Social Services in Bloomington to learn what support might be available for her and her child when they returned. She found she would be qualified for housing assistance, Medicaid, and federal child support. Even more important, she could apply for a grant from an IU Trust Fund dedicated to assisting students who were single parents.

Judith reduced her course load when she returned to IU with her daughter, whom she had named Ruth. She had received income from the dedicated University Trust Fund and from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). HUD policies did not permit her to live in campus housing, and Judith moved into a small apartment near campus.

The process of applying for social services proved to be complex. A counselor, from the Dean of Students Office and a social worker helped her to file the necessary papers and navigate the bureaucratic options responsible for providing essential services and support. She frequently had to verify her status, and once, the Social Security Administration threatened to cut her benefits because of a minor bureaucratic error. During this time, President Reagan reduced the availability of funds for the poorest Americans, saying that such assistance programs served as a disincentive to work. For Judith, however, the assistance she received meant she was able to increase her chances of becoming self-reliant.

Judith graduated in May 1983. She returned to Memphis where her family and friends helped her care for Ruth. On the basis of recommendations she had received from several Indiana University faculty, Judith was able to find a job at a branch of the Memphis Public Library.

Judith's new co-workers frequently discussed the daily news as well as their own political opinions. Initially, to be included in the conversations, she began reading her newspaper more frequently. She paid greater attention to political events, which, she knew from her experiences, could affect her, her colleagues, her family, and her community. Unlike most of her close friends, who had to work at more than one job and who had not gone to college, she now had the time, maturity, and motivation to concern herself with political affairs.

Wendy Williams died prematurely at the age of 46. As a housekeeper with no healthcare coverage, she had been unable, even with the assistance of Medicaid, to afford regular doctor visits and all necessary medications. After her return home, Judith had attempted to put her mother on her insurance plan. However, her insurance company would not permit her to do so because Wendy had a “pre-existing condition.”

Available child care facilities enabled Judith to continue working. Her budget was strained. To add to her difficulties, she saw that Orange Mound was becoming a less and less livable place. The turbulent economic conditions of the 1980s had closed many businesses in the area, and in their place had arisen pawn shops, cash advance enterprises, and liquor stores. Drugs and crime were increasing problems.

Judith knew many people who were seriously impacted as a result of the reduction of federal spending on welfare, food stamps, and other social services. She was offended by Reagan’s reference to “welfare queens” in his portrayal of welfare recipients. She read that tax breaks were being granted to big corporations. She felt that the government now was largely unconcerned with the well-being and advancement of minorities and vulnerable populations. She was disappointed that the political protests, similar to those in the 1960s, had not arisen (Dawson 1994; Tate 1994). Judith felt she could no longer live in Orange Mound. She began searching for affordable housing in White Station, the Memphis suburb in which she now worked and where, as a child, she had been bussed to school. She found a modest apartment, put the house in Orange Mound up for sale, and, in July 1987, she and Ruth moved to White Station.

### *Adulthood*

The house in Orange Mound remained unsold for two years. Judith went to several banks to try to get a loan so that she could purchase a car. Although she always made her credit card payments on time, had a stable job and no debt, at bank after bank she was refused a loan.

Several of her White co-workers expressed surprise that she would be denied a small loan, mentioning that they had been given loans with credit scores lower than hers.

Judith and Ruth attended church regularly, taking the bus back to her old church community in Orange Mound. The same pastor was still there, and some of the people Judith had grown up with remained. She renewed political conversations with her friends and pastor, and she heard more

examples of racial inequality still being faced by Black Americans. She was discouraged by the slow pace of progress, and hoped that her daughter would not have to live through the same political and social turmoil which had largely defined the world of her own childhood.

By 1992, Judith was secure in her new home. She had been promoted to assistant director of the library where she had worked since her college graduation. Ruth was now enrolled in sixth grade. Judith had developed a sense of self-confidence. Her experiences since childhood had convinced her of the importance of political policies—particularly as they impacted Black citizens and the poor. She now had some time to devote to politics, and volunteered at the local presidential campaign headquarters of Bill Clinton. She regretted not having been more politically involved in the 1980s.

Clinton's election was a relief for Judith. One of his first acts was to undo several of the executive orders issued during the administrations of Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush. He advocated cutting defense spending, raising taxes on the wealthiest Americans, who had enjoyed major tax breaks, and restoring many of the public and social services which had been reduced during the Republican presidencies. However, she was disappointed when, in 1993, Clinton signed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). From conversations with neighbors, at church, at work as well as from her own attention to the mass media, Judith concluded that, as a result of NAFTA, there was an increasing trend among manufacturers to export jobs to lower paying and less economically regulated countries. She was concerned that working-class Americans, who were disproportionately Black, would suffer from the permanent exporting of jobs.

From her work in the library, Judith became increasingly competent in her use of the internet. She began seeking out news sources that she believed did not have the conservative bias that, her colleagues at the library had convinced her, could be attributed to the main stream media. Her liberal-left political self-identity, which had long been well established and socially supported, became even more solidified.

Judith was strict, but fair, in rearing Ruth. She expected Ruth to do well in school and to prepare for a good job. She wanted to instill a strong work ethic and a desire for achievement so that her daughter would have the opportunity to find her way into the growing Black middle-class.

Ruth graduated from high school with honors in 1999. She applied to three universities and was accepted by all of them. She chose to attend the

University of Tennessee in Knoxville, where she received the Tennessee Pledge Scholarship to pursue a degree in the School of Business with a major in finance and management. Judith was extremely proud of her daughter and elated that financial limitations had not kept Ruth from pursuing a college education.

Thoughts of her mother's past and her daughter's future did somewhat attenuate Judith's long-established cynicism about the operation of America's public institutions.

George W. Bush's election in 2000 troubled Judith when she learned that the outcome of the election had been influenced by the undercounting of votes in Florida's predominantly Black precincts. She again wondered how far the country really had come since the grandfather clauses and literacy poll tests of the past (Pomper 2001; deHaven-Smith 2005).

The beginning of his presidency predisposed Judith and many members of the Black community to have little confidence in George W. Bush. Her pastor observed that Bush did not address the NAACP early in his presidency. She herself had noticed in the media that he often referred to Affirmative Action as imposing quotas and racial preferences.

In 2001, when the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were attacked, Judith was not surprised by the resulting extensive military action initiated by the US Government in Iraq and Afghanistan. She remembered how much her own family had struggled after her father's death in Vietnam, and sympathized with the families that suffered now. She saw that the war's ranks were, once again, made up of young men and women who came from predominantly blue-collar backgrounds and who were disproportionately black. Judith joined a Military Family Support Group at her church, where she wrote letters to troops and comforted families who worried about their sons and daughters.

Ruth graduated from the University of Tennessee in 2004 and found a career in a Knoxville bank. A year later she married James Morris, a lawyer with Legal Aid of East Tennessee. Judith continued to work at the Memphis branch library. However, she was not satisfied because there was little opportunity for advancement.

Judith realized she needed a Masters in Library Science degree to further her career. The University of Tennessee offered the MLS degree. She decided to apply for admission. If accepted, not only would she get the training she needed, she could also be with Ruth and James in Knoxville. With some savings and eligibility for federal aid, Judith applied to the

University and was accepted. She also received a scholarship designated for nontraditional students.

In 2006, Judith moved to Knoxville. She found a job at the public library where she continued to work part time. She was able to complete her Master's degree in two years and one summer semester. With her new credential, Judith was hired as a full-time librarian by Knoxville College, a small, historically Black liberal arts institution.

The re-election of George W. Bush in 2004 disappointed Ruth. Earlier she had learned from the *Knoxville News Sentinel* that Bush had received only 8 percent of the African American vote in 2000. She long believed that his policies, like those of his father, negatively impacted the middle-class, the poor, and minorities. Countless conversations with her co-workers at the college library, occasional chats with the school faculty in the library, and discussions with Ruth and James, had convinced her to become more politically engaged. She now regretted not having participated more actively in the political struggle for the political equality of African Americans that she had seen so dramatically enacted during her childhood in Orange Mound (Sears and Valentino 1997).

Soon after the 2006 mid-term elections, media pundits began speculating about the potential Democratic presidential candidates for 2008. Before anyone had officially announced their candidacy, Hilary Clinton and Barack Obama emerged as leaders in the polls and fund raising. Virtually all of Judith's associates at the college enthusiastically supported Obama. Many had read his book, *The Audacity of Hope* and embraced his vision of a "post-racial America" (Obama 2006). Judith's reading was considerably more cynical. Further, she was conflicted in making a choice between the first viable African American presidential candidate and the first viable female candidate (Brown 2008).

Many of Judith's friends outside of work were even less supportive of Obama. They argued he was "not black enough" to champion the interests of African American (Walters 2007). For some, this referred to his white mother, upbringing outside of the United States, Ivy League education, and generational distance from the civil rights movement. Others were troubled by his reluctance to make race a major issue in his campaign, his emphasis on universal as opposed to race-specific government programs, and his focus on a "post-racial" America (Tesler and Sears 2009). A few went even further, arguing that Obama's election would do little to advance African American empowerment goals while enabling opponents

to argue that his election proved that racism had ended in America (Reed and Lovis 2009).

It was James who finally convinced Judith to vote for Clinton in the Tennessee presidential primary. He argued that America simply was not ready for a Black president. If nominated, Obama would lose to the Republican candidate in the general election. Judith found such a likely outcome entirely unacceptable. She was relieved when Obama won the 2008 general election. Her response to his election was far less enthusiastic than that of many in her social network. However, she did feel some decrease in her sense of political alienation (Merolla et al. 2013).

After Obama's election, discussions in the news media, in her family, and at the college quickly turned to the country's rapidly deteriorating economy. Stories of bank bailouts and enormous bonuses for bank executives were particularly disturbing to everyone Judith knew (Story and Dash 2009). She continued paying greater attention to events on Capitol Hill and Wall Street. Judith and her family became increasingly disillusioned as they saw members of Congress refusing to work together. As life-long, self-identified Democrats, they were outraged when they watched news programs discussing the recalcitrance of Republicans. They were frustrated when they perceived that politicians of both parties frequently refused to provide straight, clear answers to basic policy questions. Their faith in elected officials, which was always in question, declined.

Well into Obama's first term in office, Congress remained divided. The nation was still involved in wars in both Iraq and Afghanistan despite the president's promise to withdraw troops as early as possible. Domestically, funding for social services was being reduced. On campus Judith heard the worried discussions of students and staff about reduced job opportunities and increased responsibilities at work. She was convinced that Black needs and interests were not being represented by predominantly White wealthy members of Congress—even in the context of the administration of a Black president (Hacker 2010).

In 2012 Judith, along with Ruth and James, participated in Obama's campaign, making countless phone calls and occasionally campaigning door-to-door. They realized that a Democratic presidential candidate had not won Tennessee since 1996 and that, in the 2008 election, Republican John McCain had defeated Obama 57 to 42 percent.

Judith, her family, and co-workers were all relieved by Obama's re-election. However, most were pessimistic about his chance of making a significant impact on the lives of ordinary citizens.<sup>8</sup> Later, they were

pleased by the passage of the Affordable Care Act, but frustrated when its implementation did not proceed as planned. Judith found that the health insurance available from her college had a lower premium than any of those available through the ACA.

Further, she now worried that Social Security might not exist by the time she retired.

In June 2013, news of former National Security Agency (NSA) contractor Edward Snowden's revelations concerning NSA's massive surveillance programs troubled Judith. As a librarian she had vigorously opposed the 2001 Patriot Act, a section of which required librarians to produce requested records of patrons' activities. The American Library Association had passed a formal resolution which called the law a danger to the constitutional rights and privacy rights of library users. One of Judith's neighbors, who had a son in Afghanistan, referred to Snowden as a "traitor." To Judith, he was a "patriot." As a young girl, she remembered hearing conversations about FBI spying on Black civil rights organizations and sabotaging their efforts. She saw the potential for this to happen on an even greater scale if spying on civilians were to remain unchecked.

In sharp contrast to her church in Memphis, Judith's present church has neither a politically engaged minister nor a politically active congregation. Almost all of her political discussions now involved her family and co-workers. She had learned a great deal from her son-in-law, whose legal aid work had given him considerable insight into "real world" politics.

Conversations with James had increased her interest in politics and reinforced her long-standing political cynicism. This was further exacerbated as Congress was unable to pass legislation addressing long-standing social issues such as public welfare, immigration, and economic mobility (McCarty et al. 2006).

The internet is now Judith's primary means of gathering political information. She occasionally uses Black-focused programming on television and increasingly attends to the online writings and videos of Black political commentators and advocates. Her sense of community remains strong based on her church affiliation, her co-workers with whom she shares political views, and her own awareness of current issues confronting Black citizens.



## NOTES

1. Through involvement in such organizations, children can learn what it means to belong to and matter to members of a community and develop some understanding of citizenship (Eccles and Barberi 1999).
2. See: American Political Science Association Task Force on Inequality and American Democracy (2004).
3. African Americans growing up during the Civil Rights Movement also recalled a politically more stimulating home environment than did other African Americans. They also went on to record higher levels of political participation (Verba et al. 2005).
4. Tennessee Advisory Committee to the United State Commission on Civil Rights. *School Designation in Tennessee*. Nashville (2008).
5. This parenting style facilitated Judith's success at school and her subsequent ability to think ideologically. See: Dornbusch et al. (1987), Steinberg et al. (1992), Merelman (1969).
6. Research analyzing the contents of political education in public schools during this period was reviewed in Chap. 3.
7. In the 1980 presidential election, Reagan received only 14 percent of the non-white vote. (Roper Center for Public Opinion Archives 1981).
8. While she was campaigning, some people told Judith they thought that Obama had "sold out" during his first term. Others expressed disappointment in how little he had accomplished, but were hopeful that he was now strategizing to act decisively in the interests of Black citizens in fulfilling his obligation to serve all Americans. See: Howard (2010).

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## Some “What” Questions About Future Citizens

What will the next generation of Americans believe about political democracy? What meaning and importance will they attribute to their citizenship? What will be their level of civic engagement? Tentative answers to these questions might be produced by extrapolating from existing research findings.

Each of the questions raises a normative issue. What *should* be their understanding of political democracy? What *should* their citizenship mean to them? What *should* be their level of civic engagement? Answers to these questions involve statements of value preferences. They might be supported by presenting *reasons* rather than *confirmed* by presenting empirical *evidence*.<sup>1</sup>

Additional questions focus on the agents of political socialization. What could families, schools, churches, workplaces, voluntary associations, and the media do to propagate a less superficial and more personally meaningful understanding of political democracy than that now widely shared by the public? What could they do to increase public support of and participation in such a political system? This chapter considers a limited set of research findings related to this third set of questions.

### POLITICAL DEMOCRACY

Sociologist Edward Shils (1968) usefully identified three defining qualities of political democracy. It is a regime of civilian rule, with representative institutions and public liberties. Each of these conditions requires some brief discussion.

Democracy involves civilian rule in at least two senses. The first is that in a democratic system accessibility to office and to routine political participation in general is not the exclusive privilege of an aristocratic elite or of a professional class of civil servants. All adults, regardless of class, are citizens and are eligible participants. In a democracy, political participation is emphasized and there is, in principle, equal right of access to government. Democracy also involves civilian rule in the sense that political decisions have to be justified publicly. Hence, those outside the formal authority structure have some influence over the formulation and enactment of policy.

Democracy involves representative institutions in the sense that it is derived from election by citizens. In complex societies democracy is expressed in the competitive struggle between political elites who must seek, find, and maintain support from those they govern by at least appearing to represent their interests. Hence, the decisions they make must take into account citizen preferences.

Democracy involves the maintenance of public liberties in the sense that citizens have certain rights, such as the rights of free communication and free assembly, which the state must respect. The state has limited authority based on un-coerced agreements. Violence, intimidation, and fraud are barred in principle and the rights of minorities are guaranteed in principle. In a personal postscript to his sociological classic *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics*, Seymour Martin Lipset (1981) expresses his belief that: "Only the give-and-take of a free society's internal struggles offers some guarantee that the products of the society will not accumulate in the hands of a few power-holders, and that men may develop and bring up their children without fear of persecution."<sup>2</sup>

## CITIZENSHIP

To borrow Robert Entman's memorable epithet, America is a "democracy without citizens." It is a nation in which "most of the population finds politics as a remote and unengaging concern" (Entman 1989). Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996) contend that if people were more interested, concerned, and informed about politics, they would be more likely to better discern their self-interest and connect such an enlightened self-interest to specific political opinions. They would be more likely to hold opinions that are internally consistent and stable over time and would be more likely to connect their opinions to their political participation in rational

ways. More informed individuals are more likely to be politically tolerant. In short, they would be better citizens in a number of ways consistent with normative and pragmatic notions of what constitutes good citizenship.<sup>3</sup> How might the agents of political socialization contribute to making such citizens?

Before directly addressing this question, a few of the issues related to the topic of "making better citizens" should be acknowledged. However, fully adequate discussions of any of these topics are far beyond the scope of this chapter.

First, since the French Revolution, "the concept of citizen was intended to be inclusive – to insist that all persons in a state had the right to be included in the process of collective decision making in the political arena and to receive social benefits the state might distribute" (Wallerstein 2003). If "better" citizens were made, they would be more likely to be created disproportionately in segments of society that already have higher levels of political engagement and receive the advantages that accrue from this. That is, social inequality might be exacerbated.

Second, it would be neither in the interest of the state nor to the liking of many citizens to expect virtually all citizens to take on the role of rational-activists. In their influential study of the attitudes of citizens that sustain political democracy, which they term the *civic culture*, Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba (1965) conclude that:

The civic culture is a mixed political culture. In it many individuals are active in politics, but there are also many who take the more passive role of subject. More important, even among those performing the active political role of citizen, the role of subject and parochial have not been replaced. The participant role has been added to the subject and parochial roles. This means that the active citizen retains his traditional, nonpolitical ties, as well as his more passive political role as a subject.

In addition, there are studies suggesting that an increasing number of citizens want to be less engaged in politics. They note that, although, over the past several decades, citizens have become more financially secure, better educated, and have substantially greater access to political information, political participation has declined.<sup>4</sup>

There is scholarly disagreement over the extent to which subject and parochial orientations are less essential parts of the set of attitudes that characterize "good citizens." There is more vigorous debate over changes



in the rates and forms of political participation in America that have occurred in recent decades. However, few would dispute the idea that political democracy in the country would be invigorated if more people were interested in, informed about, and involved themselves in political life. Research reviewed below suggests some of what the agents of political socialization might do to make such citizens. The discussion:

...revives questions that (were) asked in the earliest days of political socialization research: From where and how do people develop the kinds of political orientations and practices that transform the design of democratic constitutions and institutions into the creation of real, functioning democratic politics? (Sapiro 2004).

## FAMILY

Several variables affecting the strength of a family's influence as an agent of political socialization were identified in Chap. 3. The following discussion considers three fundamental orientations which, research indicates, are positively associated with engaging in democratic politics: trust in others, a sense of political efficacy, and interest in politics. To the extent that a family is incubating these attitudes, it is working to make "better" citizens.

### *Trust in Others and Sense of Political Efficacy*

The political importance of generalized interpersonal trust has been recognized by social scientists at least since the 1950s when political intolerance in America was at a high point and the maintenance of civil liberties was threatened.<sup>5</sup>

...robust democracies require citizens to tolerate others' efforts to participate in politics, even if they promote unpopular views. Research shows that citizen's political tolerance is influenced strongly by the degree of their commitment to democratic values, by their personality and by the degree to which they perceive others as threatening.<sup>6</sup>

Early political socialization research had family dynamics as a major focus. A study dealing with the consequences of parental decision making in the United States and Germany involved asking adult respondents how much

influence they remember having in their family decisions when they were around 16 years old (Lane 1972). The respondents were also asked how satisfied they remembered being with that amount of influence. Those who remembered having had at least some influence in their family during adolescence and who were not dissatisfied with the amount of influence they had had tended to be more likely than others to feel that people care about you, can be trusted, and will be influenced by your views. These feelings were found to be positively associated with participation in routine politics such as voting, discussing politics, and following accounts of political and governmental offices. Other research also found that in five countries (the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, Mexico, and the United States) family participation was positively associated with interpersonal trust and political participation among those with primary school education. However, among those with higher education, there was very little connection between family participation, trust, and political participation. This suggests that, for the better educated, interpersonal trust and political participation receive additional support outside the family sphere and thus family participation became less crucial as a determinant of political involvement (Almond and Verba 1965).

Interpersonal trust and sense of political efficacy are also fostered in families whose children are expected to be responsible for their own behavior at an early age. However, many parents who do attempt early training find it difficult to remain affectionate toward their children when errors occur, and resort to physical punishment. This often produces anxiety on the part of both parents and children and establishes a relatively cold and questioning relationship between them (Merelman 1969).

Children's sense of political efficacy (their beliefs about their competence to understand and to participate effectively in politics) is particularly encouraged in families in which parents are interested in politics, discuss politics among themselves, and participate in political activities. However, level of family politicization is an important factor in moving children from low to medium efficacy, but apparently has less effect in moving them into the high-efficacy category. The family plays a dominant role in all social classes, although among upper-class children its total effect relative to that of the peer group and school is less than it is among the lower class (Langston and Karns 1969). This may be an early source of subsequent political inequality. Education often exacerbates early political advantages created in the family (Beaumont 2011).

### *Values*

Parent's basic value priorities influence their family communication patterns. Such patterns can serve as an indirect influence on their children's political interest as shown in their media use, their levels of political knowledge, and the frequency of their political discussions (Chafee et al. 1973; Tims 1986). The values found to promote political engagement were initially identified by Ronald Inglehart (1971) as "post materialist." These favor associational and intellectual needs, such as giving the people more say in making important political decisions and protecting freedom of speech over "acquisitive values" such as maintaining order in the nation, fighting crime, and procuring symbols of affluence to enhance status.

The communication patterns of parents with "post-materialist" values tend to include children in family decision-making processes and to question the opinions of others. Parents with "acquisitive" values tend to emphasize family harmony, hierarchal family decision making, discourage questioning the view of adults, and saying things that might disturb others. It appears that certain communication patterns are simply more congruent with particular belief and value systems than are others (Tims 1985).

The results of studies examining the impact of parental values indicate that political socialization can involve subtle and complex as well as direct influences. How parents transmit their political beliefs and attitudes sometimes may be as important as the contents of their messages.<sup>7</sup>

There is some difference between the emphasis on parental values indirectly influencing children's democratic orientations and the concerns of the early political socialization research exploring the ways in which the family might contribute to the maintenance of political democracy. Studies conducted in the 1960s and 1970s focused on American political stability and persistence in light of the perceived threat to the United States and its democratic institutions represented by America's ideological adversary, the Soviet Union. The family, along with the school and the church, were seen as essential to the maintenance of political democracy by inculcating diffuse positive support of and loyalty to the nation, respect for the government, and compliance with the law.<sup>8</sup>

Today, research examining the question of what families can do to promote political democracy is more likely to focus on making the concept more personally meaningful and engaging for their future citizens. This involves providing their children with experiences with democracy—

experiences from which they learn that others are trustworthy and that their voices will be heard and taken into account in social decision making. Without early, concrete experiences with the practice of democracy, later discussions of democracy as an abstract concept and the notion of "good citizenship" are likely to have little personal significance.

## SCHOOL

Findings of early research on the school as an agent of political socialization were reviewed in Chap. 3. Studies found that American public schools produced acquiescent and allegiant students who had little information about American political structures and processes and, at best, some abstract and vague understanding of political democracy. The initial work also presented some suggestions concerning how school might create better politically informed and more politically interested involved students. The suggestions may well have as much value today as they did several decades ago. They include:

1. greater emphasis on democratic values such as the freedom to criticize government, equal rights for all, tolerance of diversity, and freedom of the mass media (Torney et al. 1975).
2. greater concern with the causes and explanation of political events (Stacey 1978).
3. open classroom discussion of controversial subject matter (Ehman 1980).
4. greater emphasis on developing political competencies and sense of political responsibility for participating in efforts to improve society for the common benefit (Stacey 1978).
5. more discussion of structural as well as the individual sources of economic, social, and political inequality (Tapper 1976).
6. greater emphasis on critical thinking and the right to challenge the prevailing political-economic system (Gillespie 1975).
7. greater use of materials that offers a variety of perspectives on American political history (Marger 1981).
8. development of less authoritarian school organizational and governance climates (Ehman 1980).

In the mid-1990s there was a resurgence of research interest in the political role of the school. Several studies were undertaken to determine

the consequences of the *Kids Voting Program* (KV). KV was a project undertaken by a nonprofit, nonpartisan, grassroots organization as a response to low voter turnout and academic pessimism about the effectiveness of school civics programs (Merrill et al. 1994; Chaffee et al. 1995). KV presented an individualized curriculum for grades K-12 and stressed cooperative learning, group problem solving and active, hands-on experience. Launched in Arizona in 1988, by 1994 it had been adopted in 20 states plus the District of Columbia, reaching 23 million students at a budgeted cost of \$5 million, all provided by private sources (Simon and Merrill 1998).

Research conducted in 1988, 1990, and 1992 found that adoption of KV was associated with an increase in voter turnout of 1.7 to 3.9 percent in program areas. Participating students themselves had high levels of news media use. For example, overall, 73 percent said they frequently or occasionally watched television news coverage of a political campaign and 76 percent said they felt it was very important for people to vote. The majority reported that they actively talked about a campaign with their family and said they would want to participate in such a civics program again.

A review of numerous studies of the impact of KV produced a list of recommendations as to what schools might do to increase the likelihood that they would make more interested, informed, and engaged future citizens who have a personally meaningful understanding of, and commitment to, political democracy. (Several of these replicate suggestions from other studies discussed earlier). Actions include:

1. incorporating parents in civic projects.
2. using media in civic learning.
3. teaching to coincide with major political events.
4. translating classroom instruction into community activism such as students' campaigns aimed at mobilizing adults to vote.
5. discussing topics of greater relevance to youth.
6. engaging topical debates.
7. making greater effort to involve students from low income homes.
8. promoting citizenship beyond voting, including participating in boycotts and protests (McDevitt and Kiouisis 2006).

Analysis of a similar supplementary civic education project, the *Student Voice Program*, sought to determine the primary factors accounting for the approach's documented success in increasing participating students'

subsequent involvement in political life. The results suggested that supplementary civics education programs can increase subsequent participation in politics by building long-term gains in political self-efficacy and skills in using the news media to follow government and political affairs (Pasek et al. 2008).

Additional studies also concluded that school programs aimed at developing students' commitment to civic and political engagement can and do produce future citizens, who are more civically and politically engaged as adults than adolescents who express less commitment to act (Ajzen 2001; Osterle et al. 2004). Further, data suggest that enrolling relatively low-income and minority students in such programs could help schools promote higher and more equitable levels of political engagement, thereby reducing political inequality in America.<sup>9</sup>

## CHURCH

Chapter 3 offered several suggestions concerning what religious organizations might do to enhance citizen understanding of, commitment to, and involvement in American political democracy. These included legitimating the political system, providing experiences with democratic procedures, encouraging political tolerance, and instilling beliefs promoting political engagement. Here, two of these related actions will be considered further: political legitimation and citizen participation.

Sociologists have long recognized the "double function" of religions not only in the legitimation of structures of power and privilege on the one hand, but also as a source of protest and opposition to injustice and inequality on the other (Billings and Scott 1994). Initial political socialization research focused on early affective identification of children with political authorities, institutions, and national symbols. These were seen as positive conditions for democratic and political stability (Easton and Dennis 1969; Greenstein 1965; Hess and Torney 1967). Much subsequent analysis tended to view protests as signals of threat to the democratic consensus that underlies the institutions of a civil society. However, this view of extra-institutional political action changed radically in the 1960s and early 1970s when large-scale social movements emerged in the United States and Europe (Orum and Dale 2009).

One of the most dramatic examples of religious organizations operating as agents of political socialization supporting democracy can be seen in the role they played in the American civil rights movement of the period. Churches provided their members with a social identity and a set of shared

values which defined racially based social inequality as unjust and requiring collective action for its elimination. To the extent that the churches could define the values as having divine origin, they were able to “exert over their members pressure unimaginable in most secular organizations.”<sup>10</sup>

In the early 1960s:

Religious persons were especially sensitive to the clear ethical issues posed by the pending (civil rights) legislation...the fact that substantial numbers of Americans still were denied the right to vote and to have access to public accommodations because of the color of their skin was a moral contradiction that overcame, at least for the moment, any other hesitations or prejudices about race these churchgoers possessed (Findlay 1990).

The civil rights activities of the churches during the 1960s illustrated what religious organizations can do to promote democracy: mobilize their numbers’ moral concerns in support of civil liberties and social equality. However, history offers a cautionary note. Their leadership was only temporary.

(T)hroughout their history, even in the heyday of the Social Gospel, the churches were enmeshed in the very system of racial discrimination that in 1963 and 1964 they criticized and hoped to change. Soon they fell back into the traditional ways or seemed paralyzed, especially in the late sixties by tumult and confusion (82).

The ongoing debate over access to abortion offers a more recent example of religious organizations working as agents of political socialization in mobilizing their numbers. However, the religious community is dramatically divided on this issue. Each side contends it is supporting democratic principles by representing the view of the majority of grassroots citizens in pursuit of a moral and just cause.

Churches opposing abortion (pro-life) argue that life begins at conception and therefore abortion “murders babies that have a God given right to life.” The legalization of abortion represents a rise in humanism and moral relativism which undermine the traditional family. It also promotes the rights and desires of woman at the expense of families and men. In addition, abortion leads to women subsequently suffering physically and psychologically. In short, abortion denies the rights to life and the maintenance of traditional American values.<sup>11</sup>

Churches supporting the right to an abortion (pro-choice) argue that a woman’s right must be promoted over that of the fetus. The fetus is not a

person. The majority of Americans support a woman’s right to choose. A lack of abortion services will lead to back alley abortions and the unnecessary deaths of women. Absence of choice imposes the view of a small minority resulting in denial of women’s fundamental right to self-determination.<sup>12</sup>

To the extent that churches limited their political rhetoric to positively portraying a partisan position, they were supporting democratic participation. However, this was far from the case. Religious organizations on both sides of the abortion debate expressed glaring differences in American perceptions of life, liberty, and responsibility. In doing so they tended to engage in *vilification*, “a rhetorical strategy that discredits adversaries by characterizing them as un-genuine and malevolent advocates. Rather than differentiating opponents as good people with differences of opinion, vilification delegitimizes them through characterizations of intentions, actions and identities” (Vanderford 1989).

Social division and weakening commitment to democratic values and processes are exacerbated when religious leaders arouse their believers to action in service to a special interest. Political clashes in the United States over abortion and same-sex marriage are unique among Western democracies in that individual citizens have retained traditional values on issues of sexuality and gender roles, while other nations have been more supportive of individual rights and freedoms. Political rhetoric in the United States is also distinctive in the prominent role that religion plays in fueling political rhetoric (Inglehart and Baker 2000; Sherkat et al. 2010).

Religious organizations in America could promote democracy by mobilizing their members to participate in political movements pursuing democratic values, such as social and political equality, while exercising considerable restraint in vilifying those who oppose their views. However, the political viability of such an approach is certainly open to question.

## WORKPLACE

As noted in Chap. 3, within the workplace people can acquire politically relevant skills, discuss differing political perspectives, and perform social service. All of this can promote political democracy. Such wide influence results from the fact that:

Work organizations offer a person far more than nearly a job. Indeed, from the time individuals first enter a workplace to the time they leave their membership behind, they experience and often commit themselves to a distinct



way of life with its own rhythms, rewards, relationships, demands and potentials (Van Manne and Schein 1979).

Work contexts that have democratic authority structures have been found to promote political participation. Such structures are defined as those composed of semi-autonomous, self-managing work groups (Elden 1981; Sobel 1993). The importance of such groups for citizen involvement has increased as numerous and diverse social processes such as suburbanization, outsourcing, downsizing, and generational changes have disrupted social networks in which community-oriented values could develop (Fisher and White 2000; Jian and Jeffres 2008; Putnam 2000).

The importance of the workplace for acquiring experiences that promote democratic engagement varies by gender. Women are less likely to have full-time positions and to be employed in jobs requiring education and training. They are less likely to have supervisory experiences and to engage in activities such as organizing meetings and making presentations. Women who do have high-level jobs tend to develop greater participatory benefits at work. Data suggest that greater workplace participation by women would probably reduce the gender inequality in political activity (Schlozman et al. 1999).

There are at least two specifications for the proposition that participation in workplace decision making increases the probability of participating in politics outside the workplace. First, participation must involve direct, face-to-face encounters. It is only in such contexts that workers can improve their skills at deliberating, negotiating, and information processing essential to meaningful democratic engagement. Second, participation needs to occur within enterprises that are economically stable. Involvement in decision making in economically troubled enterprises can damage the link to outside political participation by undermining the sense of efficacy that is important for the engaged citizen. “While this may be good reasons to increase the level of employee involvement in decision making at work...it might make more sense to focus on raising the general level of education attainment in the population if our objective is to increase overall levels of political participation in the United States” (Greenberg et al. 1996).

## VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS

“Political theorists from Alexis de Tocqueville to Robert Dahl have stressed the central role of secondary associations in providing institutional foundations of political pluralism and thus of viable multi party political contestation” (Hirst 2002).

Associations contribute to democracy in many ways. They provide experience with the values of associative life, foster civic virtues, teach political skills, offer resistance to power and checking government, improve the quality and equality of representation, facilitate public deliberation, and create opportunities for citizens and groups to participate directly in governance (Fung 2003).

Voluntary associations promote generalized interpersonal trust and tolerance that enable people to pursue their common objectives more effectively. They also encourage political optimism—the belief that politicians are interested in the welfare of other people. These views have been found to promote acceptance of viewpoints greater than self-interest, even when the associations themselves pursue more privately oriented concerns (Stolle and Rochon 1998).

Clearly, not all associations contribute to each of these consequences. It seems likely that most develop some willingness to cooperate with others and private ties of solidarity within them. However, there are some that also work against the promotion of generalized trust, tolerance, and the good of the wider society. Religious fundamentalists and militia groups serve as examples. This indicates that the contribution of a voluntary association to political democracy is largely determined by the purposes to which the association is dedicated and whether or not the association brings its members into contact with a broad sampling of members of society. Examples of associations promoting democratic orientations include environmental, human rights, and peace groups (Paxton 2002).

Voluntary associations can play a particularly important role in the political socialization of immigrants and their incorporation into the democratic process. For individuals, participation in voluntary associations can increase their social relations both within and beyond their ethnic community, improve language skills, and facilitate learning their new political culture (Handy and Greenspan 2009). It can increase their sense of civic duty, influence their beliefs about the efficacy of voting, and increase their commitment to democratic ideals (Cho 1999).

A high level of voluntarism within an ethnic neighborhood can enhance its reputation and legitimacy within the broader community. Ethnic consolidation tends to increase voter turnout via information flow. Large concentrations of a particular group are also the beneficiaries of mobilization efforts for political parties and candidates (Cho et al. 2006).

Schools, churches, workplaces, ethnic groups, and communities can promote democracy when they facilitate the development of voluntary

associations within them. At both the individual and collective levels, voluntarism has been shown to encourage citizens to become more politically interested, informed, engaged, and to support government characterized by civilian rule, representative institutions, and public liberties.

## MEDIA

Broadcast, print, and online media are the primary sources of political information out of which citizens construct their understanding of politics and subsequently the contents of their political discussions. Such conversations modify media influence, which itself mediates the effects of demographic, ideological, and the social identities of gender, race, ethnicity, and social class (Kim and Kim 2008; Shah et al. 2007).

*Communication competence* is particularly important in shaping the influence of media consumption on political and civic engagement. The concept refers to the ability to critically assess political information, reflect on public affairs, form arguments, express opinions, manage disagreements, and develop complex understandings of issues (Shah et al. 2007). Many citizens lack such competence (Iyengar and Kinder 1987; Zaller 1992). This raises the question of how American democracy can possibly work when citizens lack the competence or sophistication required for the decisions they must make. One plausible answer to this question is that citizens can make informed political assessments by employing information shortcuts such as referring to party labels, polls, and endorsements. In the context of a competitive two-party system, these make readily available a considerable amount of free information.<sup>13</sup>

By 2013, half of the American public was using the internet as a main source for national and international news—still below television but far above newspapers (28 percent) and radio (23 percent) (Caumont 2013). Interactive technologies such as e-mail, instant messaging, electronic bulletin boards, online chatrooms, and feedback loops to news organizations and politicians make interpersonal communication possible that promotes political discussion that can involve sharing of political perspectives and concerns. They can facilitate civic messaging, encourage individual political participation, and assist the coordination of citizen action addressing civic concerns.<sup>14</sup>

Some of the political material appearing on the internet simply reproduces what appears on the traditional media. However, since the mid-1990s, online personal journals (blogs) have increasingly become sources

of political information and sites for political communication. Political blogs often have a stated bias, are critical of mainstream news reporting, and present items that do not appear in the traditional media. Some provide in-depth discussions from different perspectives (Singer 2006; Johnson and Kaye 2013).

Blogs do not necessarily follow the supposed practices and standards of the traditional media such as presenting carefully verified information and a balance of viewpoints. (Press officials contend that mainstream media's best chance of remaining financially viable is to convince the public that they and their online counterparts are highly credible, accurate, and ethical) (Aeikens 2009).

The credibility individuals attribute to an information source, whether online or traditional, tends to be influenced by the extent to which the material it presents appears to concur with their own values and beliefs (Melican and Dixon 2008). Further, the more individuals rely on a source, the more credible they perceive it to be (Greer 2003; Wanta and Hu 1994). When people judge information as credible only because it concurred with their own political views, they encourage the development of a political system whose citizens hold polarized, fragmented, intolerant, and misinformed political views (Stroud 2010; Mutz and Martin 2001).

The proliferation of news sources vastly increases the problems associated with selective exposure and avoidance. Overall, however, the much greater access to a variety of political views is likely to have democratizing consequences. First, encountering differing reports can lead some to reconsider their own previously unquestioned views on political issues. To the extent that cognition influences political behavior, such learning would promote change in patterns of political participation such as issue-based voting more in line with the interest of the audience. Second, encountering alternative perspectives can produce in others greater clarity and certainty in their own beliefs through their improved understanding of another point of view. It is a commonplace observation that understanding what one has rejected produces greater appreciation of what one has accepted. Third, partisan accounts can disseminate the views of those generally lacking the resources and ability to define social issues for the mass public. Such reports can rest on as much empirical evidence as more familiar perspectives that are socially accepted as uncontested representation of social reality. Fourth, ironically, partisan media presentations can promote unity by presenting definitions of political issues that, as a result of their bias, correspond to the perspective of those that are widely held

by the public. Shared understanding of the social world promotes social integration.

Since 2008, when the Obama campaign successfully used social media to appeal to younger voters, there has been considerable discussion of the importance of the internet as an agent of political socialization for adolescents and young adults (Smith and Rainie 2008). “New media may well challenge the role or fill in some of the gap left by traditionally strong socializers such as family, church and school. Especially, the role played by parents for their children as key socializers with regard to politics is changing” (Baker and deVreese 2011). Young people’s preference for entertainment on the internet is negatively associated with their political participation. However, they can and do use the internet in politically active ways such as visiting websites, discussing politics in discussion forums, and signing online petitions. Overall, for young people, internet use is positively associated with both traditional as well as these newer forms of political engagement.

Much has been written about ways of changing both traditional and online media in ways that improve their contribution to the development of a better politically and socially informed, more tolerant and more engaged citizenry. An obvious point of departure for considering a few suggestions involves both traditional and electronic media subjecting their factual claims and editorial statements to more careful and responsible examination. Their rush to report, generally commercially and politically driven, could be slowed down. This is particularly the case for producers of internet material. Survey data indicate that respondents rarely verify web-based information, which they view as credible as that obtained from television, radio, and magazines—though not as credible as newspapers. However, whereas traditional sources all undergo certain levels of factual verification, analysis of content, and editorial review, by and large internet information is subject to no such scrutiny (Flanagan and Metzger 2000).

Much of the criticism of mainstream media’s failure to create greater public understanding of American politics and encourage democratic participation focuses on two of its basic features: corporate ownership and profit orientation and dependence on government, corporations, and other elite sources of information.<sup>15</sup>

It has been argued widely that the mass media are better understood as private companies selling products rather than as public resources serving the public interest (Croteau and Hoynes 2001). Most forcefully stated, the view maintains that: “Their *raison d’état* is the promotion of consum-

erism, and the development of the secure, confident, materialistic society in which consumerism flourishes” (Qualter 1985). However, it should be noted that:

The U.S. *media* do not function in the manner of the propaganda system of a totalitarian state. Rather, they permit – indeed encourage – spirited debate, criticism, and dissent, as long as these remain faithfully with the system of presuppositions and principles that constitute an elite consensus, a system so powerful as to be internalized without awareness (Herman and Chomsky 1988).<sup>16</sup>

In his seminal work, Herbert Gans proposed that the most basic change the mainstream media could undertake in order to better serve political democracy as an agent of political socialization would involve presenting *multiperspectival news* (Gans 1979). Such news would have five features:

1. Moving beyond equating the federal government with the nation. It would report comprehensively about more nationwide agencies including corporations, unions, voluntary associations, and interest groups.
2. Adding a bottom-up view to the current top-down approach. For example, news about federal and corporate policies would be followed by reactions from citizens in various walks of life who are affected by those policies.
3. Reporting more extensively on how the plans and programs of public and private agencies have actually worked out for intended and unintended beneficiaries, victims, and the general public.
4. Making reporting more representative by including the activities and opinions of all sectors of the population.
5. The news would place more emphasis on *service* news, what people consider relevant news for themselves. For example, people of different ages, incomes, and occupations who come into contact with different international agencies need international news about those agencies which affect their own lives.

In a subsequent work, Gans contends that the role of the media is to inform citizens and thereby increase the likelihood that they will participate politically, especially in the democratic debate that is central to democratic engagement. However, while emphasizing the role of the media

as agents of political socialization, he concedes that “media and journalists can do little to reduce the political imbalance between citizens and the economic, political and other organizations that dominate America” (Gans 2003).

Graber, McQuail, and Norris (1988) also conclude that furthering democracy will require considerably more than improving the media as an agent of political socialization:

Whatever is done will have to be gradual and long term and will depend on the ability of democratic institutions to solve their own problems of communication effectively with diverse publics by continual adaptation. It will involve the combined efforts of active citizens, politicians who take a wider view of their responsibilities, and journalists and other media people who recognize a professional and institutional task of informing citizens (Graber et al. 1998).<sup>17</sup>

We have reviewed a number of suggestions concerning ways in which the agents of political socialization might make “better” citizens—politically informed and engaged individuals who have a reasonably clear understanding of and personal commitment to political democracy, its inherent values, and the role they can play as active participants in such a system. Among other things, families could provide their children more experience with democratic processes within them. The structure of schools could be made less authoritarian. They could place greater emphasis on inculcating core democratic values such as equal rights and tolerance of diversity. They could do more to develop political competencies and a sense of responsibility to improve society. Churches could also become less authoritarian and make greater effort to teach tolerance, compassion, and equality. Workplaces and voluntary associations could move to provide democratic experiences, teach political skills and promote civic interest, concern, and involvement. Media could provide more political information, offer a greater variety of political perspectives, and encourage civic engagement.

There are major political, economic, and cultural constraints on the ability of each of the agents of political socialization to produce each of these changes. If somehow, they could make “better citizens,” this would represent only a first step toward creating a genuinely democratic society.

## NOTES

1. A *reason* is a statement or set of statements of assumed facts that a speaker or writer considers likely to affect the attitudes of an audience. Whether this reason will support the view being proposed will depend on whether or not the audience believes it, and upon whether, if they do, it will actually make a difference in their view. However, it may conveniently be called a *reason* (although not necessarily a “valid” one) regardless whether it is accepted or not. Stevenston, C.L. 1944. *Ethics and Language*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press: 114–115.
2. For another discussion of the concept of democracy and an evaluation of the rise of democratic governance as the “preeminent development of the twentieth century” see Sen (1999).
3. Citizenship also has an ethical dimension. This includes recognition of the civil and political rights of others and a concern with the general welfare of others. See Marshall (1950), Denters et al. (2007).
4. These are some political analysts who reject the thesis that citizen political engagement has declined in recent decades. They argue that, while data do indicate some reduction in citizen participation in routine politics such as voting, many now engage in more direct political action such as contacting public officials via the electronic media, working with public interest groups, and consuming or rejecting commercial products based on considerations such as their environmental impact or corporate hiring practices. That is, participation has not declined but has taken new forms of engagement. See Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002), Macedo et al. (2005), Putnam (2000), Wattenberg (2002), Dalton (2008), Norris (2002), Zukin (2006).
5. See Almond and Verba (1965), Gibson (1992), McClosky and Brill (1983), Nunn et al. (1978), Putnam (2000), Stouffer (1955), Sullivan et al. (1982).
6. Sullivan and Transue (1999).
7. See Austin (1993), Beck (1977), Connell (1972), Liebes and Ribak (1992), Sheinkopf (1973).
8. See Dawson et al. (1977), Easton and Dennis (1969), Greenstein (1965), Hess and Torney (1967), Langton (1969).



9. Such projects represent a concern with the radical transformation of the function of political socialization in many American schools. For graphic descriptions of political socialization in many American schools. For graphic descriptions of political socialization in inner city public schools in past decades, see Kahne and Sporte (2008), Kozol (1967), Dennison (1999).
10. Four factors increased the likelihood that church-going Protestants approved participating in political conflict: volunteering for church organizations, a perception that religious values were being threatened, a belief that individuals should not be allowed to deviate from Christian moral standards, and a belief that humans are inherently sinful. See Wald et al. (2005), McVeigh and Sikkink (2001).
11. “Pro-life” churches include Assemblies of God, Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day-Saints, Church of the Nazarene, Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, Southern Baptist Convention, Roman Catholic, and hundreds of other Fundamentalist, Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Evangelical congregations.
12. “Pro-choice” churches include Episcopal, Evangelical Lutheran, Jewish, Presbyterian, Unitarian Universalist, United Church of Christ, and United Methodist.
13. See Berggen (2001), Boudreau (2009), Druckman (2001), Mondak (1993), Popkin (1991).
14. See Bimber (2001), Davis (1999), Lupia and Sin (2003), Norris and Jones (1998), Price and Cappella (2002), Shah et al. (2005).
15. It has been suggested that private ownership of the news media and the increasing profit orientation of news organizations actually provides something of a counterweight to official power. See Cook (2005).
16. For further discussion of such coverage, see Bagdikian (2000).
17. Moving beyond consideration of the traditional media as agents of political socialization, it has been suggested that specifically promoting “e-government”—using internet-based technologies to facilitate interactions between citizens and government—might improve government transparency and accountability, modernize delivery of government services, increase citizen trust in government, and encourage citizen participation in the public decision-making process. See Belanger and Carter (2008), Heeks and Bailur (2007), Tolbert and Mossberger (2006), West (2004).

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