Political Socialization in the Twenty-first Century:

Recommendations for Researchers

Diana Owen

Associate Professor of Political Science
Chair, American Studies
Georgetown University
3520 Prospect Street, NW
Suite 311
Washington, D.C. 20057
email: owend@georgetown.edu
phone: (202) 687-7194
fax: (202) 687-1720

Introduction

The twenty-first century was ushered in with the requisite sense of anticipation tempered by trepidation that accompanies the arrival of a new millennium. It soon became clear that the new century would be marked by radical developments. The September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States and the subsequent incursions into Afghanistan and Iraq signaled the beginning of an era that has been characterized by threat, fear, and uncertainty. The global media and communications system has been undergoing a major transformation. The world economy has become increasingly unstable, as illustrated by the collapse of large-scale financial institutions and madly fluctuating investment markets. In addition, there have been distinct shifts in the national and community cultural contexts within which politics and civic engagement take place. Significant changes are evident in the norms and actions surrounding relations involving gender, race and ethnicity, religion, and social class (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005). These factors all point to the fact that the political socialization in the twenty-first century is likely to exhibit some unique currents.

Political socialization, the process by which citizenship orientations are transmitted, is conditioned by shifts in the political, social, and economic contexts at the community, nation-state, and international levels. The complexities that characterize the political socialization process and its outcomes become especially evident during periods of transition and upheaval. Having a strong grasp of how the socialization process works can provide us with tremendous insights into the changes that are going on in a society and how they are affecting democratic regimes. According to Almond, political socialization "not only gives us insight into the pattern of political culture and subcultures in [a] society, but also locates for us in the socialization processes of the society the point where particular qualities and elements are being sustained or modified" (Almond, 1960: 31).

These rather unpredictable, even tumultuous, times give rise to the question: What makes a citizen in the twenty-first century? This paper will speculate on the ways in which political socialization may mimic or depart from socialization in previous eras. The paper begins by defining the concept of political socialization as a process that warrants examination at both the system and individual levels of analysis. I make the case that much research has focused on individual level trends without adequately taking into account the larger historical, political, and situational contexts within which socialization takes place. The limitations inherent in political socialization research have hindered our ability to adequately document and assess changes in the making of citizens over time. Next, I will discuss trends in youth civic engagement in light of revisionist perspectives that challenge the conventional characterization of the disengaged young citizen. I then suggest that political socialization research in the twenty-first century should be cognizant of the influence of macro level factors, like immigration and globalization, that the scholarly treatment of the agents of socialization should be refined, and that analyzing the effects of technological developments on the socialization process is an important avenue for investigation.

Political Socialization

Political socialization is a messy, in some ways elusive, process. Broadly construed, political socialization is the transmission of political culture to new generations of citizens in a given society (Almond and Verba, 1963, Gimpel, et al., 2003). It is the product of interlocking sets of macro and micro level phenomena. The fundamental question underpinning macro level political socialization research is: how do polities transmit values, attitudes, beliefs, opinions, and behaviors to the mass public? Micro level studies ask: how and why do people become citizens?

At the macro or political system level, political socialization is the means by which polities and other political societies inculcate appropriate norms and practices in citizens, residents, and members (Sapiro, 2004: 2). Polities convey established patterns of thought and action, laws and norms, and traditions and folkways through agencies, such as the family, educational system, peer groups, mass media, political institutions, community organizations, religious organizations, and the military (Beck, 1977; Marshall, 1998). The kinds of questions that are addressed at the macro level focus on "where and how 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 polities" (Sapiro, 2004: 19).

At the micro or individual level, political socialization constitutes "the patterns and processes by which individuals engage in political development and learning, constructing their particular relationships to the political contexts in which they live" (Sapiro, 2004: 3). As a result of political socialization, individuals acquire knowledge about the political system and how it works. They internalize the society's political value system and ideology, and come to understand its symbols and rituals. They become informed about the role of active and passive members of the polity, and may participate in political and civic life.

It is difficult to take stock of research on political socialization without being impressed by the enormity of the task at hand. It is clearly impossible to account for every nuance and situational wrinkle that may explain differences in the socialization experience. Yet, the accumulated knowledge from nearly early eighty years of social scientific inquiry into the making of citizens is remarkable. It provides a wealth of theoretical insights as well as a voluminous empirical findings that provide a vital baseline for future studies. However impressive the existing body of political socialization scholarship, there are issues that need to be

addressed as we go forward. Significant theoretical and methodological issues have straight-jacketed the enterprise, and at times have contributed to misleading interpretations about the citizenship orientations of young people in society..

The problems of the value-laden theoretical assumptions and overly-narrow empirical referents that have plagued political socialization scholarship have been well-documented. Social scientific research has largely been guided by particularized notions of the good citizen that severely limit the scope of inquiry (Sherrod, et al., 2002). These include "the citizen as loyal subject and patriot," "the citizen as voter," and "the citizen as enlightened community participant" (Owen, 2004). The over-reliance on survey research and the focus on a narrow set of indicators, many of which are tied to voting, has led scholars and commentators to underestimate the scope and substance of youth political engagement. For example, measures of political knowledge that have been used to label young people as uninformed are overly simplistic and trivial. Esoteric questions, such as naming cabinet members or listing the countries with permanent seats on the United Nations Security Council or identifying the political party to which the prime minister of Poland belongs (Milner, 2007; Pew Research Center question archive), do little to assess individuals' understanding of government, politics, or civic life (Dudley and Gitelson, 2003).

Further, the dynamic nature of the political socialization process is not captured by research which tends to present static snapshots of discrete empirical relationships between well-trodden variables. Political socialization produces distinct generational patterns that at the same time are riddled with subtleties and contradictions. Few investigations have successfully dealt with the underlying causes of historical, generational, or time-related differences in political

socialization.[i] There is a failure to recognize how changes in the nature, structure, and operation of agents over time can fundamentally alter the socialization process.

There is a paucity of research that takes into account more than superficially the intersection of macro and micro level socialization, and examines how system-level factors influence individual's socialization to citizenship. The vast majority of studies are individual level explorations devoid of context or comparison. Generalizations about the political socialization of Americans are often based on findings about white, middle class subjects. Crude demographic controls that are frequently used to identify trends among diverse populations are largely inadequate. Contextual factors, such as differences in learning methods, access to institutions, such as political party organizations, social groups, and online communities, and the degree to which young people are exposed to adult conversations and activities influence socialization (Sapiro, 2004). Gimpel, et al. (2003) demonstrate the importance of taking context seriously in their study of adolescent political attitudes in Baltimore area schools. They find that students who lived within a few miles of one another had vastly different experiences and political orientations based on their local community and school environment even after demographics and socio-economic status were taken into account. Cross-national and cross-cultural studies are rare, yet they have the potential to identify differences in political values and orientations that are linked to particular conditions, such as those associated with stable versus newly emerging democracies (Torney-Purta, 2002; Hooghe, 2004).

Youth Engagement Revisited

Young people in America have long anchored the low end of the good citizenship chart. Since the post-Baby Boom era of the 1980s, they have been routinely characterized as being politically apathetic, uninterested, and disengaged. A spate of studies points to their low levels of political knowledge, interest in public affairs, and voter turnout. Young people exhibit a less

developed sense of civic duty, and take the obligations of citizenship more lightly than older

cohorts (Dalton, 2008). They are unlikely to take part in political activities, such as contacting

officials, signing and circulating petitions, attending political meetings, and working on election

campaigns. Youth have been found to have less of a commitment to the American creed and its

ideals of equality of opportunity and freedom in society than older people, as well as slightly

lower levels of patriotism. They are somewhat more inclined to trust political institutions than

their older counterparts, although this is often chalked up to their naivete and lack of experience

with government. They are as likely as others to distrust business, labor, legal institutions, the

educational system, and the media, but less likely to trust other people (see Galston, 2001, 2007).

On a personal level, young people are stereotyped as self-interested, spoiled, greedy, and

disrespectful. A 2005 Pew Research Center study found that 79% of the public answered "no" to

the question: "Do you believe that young people have as strong a sense of right and wrong as

they did 50 years ago?," while only18% answered in the affirmative (Pew Research Center,

2005).[ii] These trends have been attributed, often without supporting evidence, to young people's

preference for and production of "superbad" popular culture that embraces social disorder,

violence, laziness, and promiscuity. Some observers point to young people's obsession with

digital media, especially personal devices like cell phones, as evidence that they are self-

absorbed, distracted, and rude (Shea and Green, 2007).

These widely-held views of the bad young citizen whose attitudes and behavior are

detrimental to democracy have sparked great concern about the future of American civic life

(Putnam, 2000). Questions have been raised about the nation's ability to cultivate dedicated

leaders (Wattenberg, 2007), especially as young people appear to eschew politics as a corrupt

wasteland made worse by the fact that there is little money to be made in government service.

Given these conditions, doubts have been raised about the ability of traditional agencies, such as

families, schools, and political party organizations, to successfully socialize young citizens to politics.

Recently, scholars have begun to reexamine the evidence concerning young people's citizenship orientations. They have expanded to scope of inquiry to consider a wider range of norms and activities. A more balanced, sophisticated, and comprehensive look at youth engagement reveals a complex picture that is far less negative. While young people may not be at the forefront of certain forms of political participation, such as voting, they clearly are (and have been) engaged in a range of activities commensurate with good citizenship, like volunteering. In fact, there has been an overall decline in political and civic involvement since World War II that is not confined to young people (Shea and Green, 2007). Current trends point in a positive direction, as young people today are participating in mainstream politics and voting in higher numbers.

In an attempt to sort out what appears to be conflicting evidence about youth activation, some researchers have drawn a distinction between political engagement and civic engagement. Political engagement constitutes involvement with the formal institutions and processes of government. It includes activities like voting, campaign participation, attending town meetings, joining a political party, contacting public officials, keeping informed about government and current affairs, engaging in discussions of politics, and running for office. Political engagement is associated with the norms of duty-based citizenship which emphasizes the formal obligations, responsibilities, and rights of the citizen-subject as they have been defined historically (Dalton, 2008), as well as political tolerance defined as mutual forbearance (Callan, 2004). Those who ascribe to duty-based citizenship norms accept a limited participatory role in politics, relegating authority to elites and acquiescing to the existing political order (Dalton, 2008).

Civic engagement encompasses "working to make a difference in the civic life of communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make that difference" (Ehrlich, 2000: xi). It includes voluntarily working on behalf of a cause and helping others either individually or as part of an organized effort. Examples of civic engagement include non-electoral activities, like volunteering in a soup kitchen, joining a neighborhood association, advocating on behalf of a person in need, and buying "green" products to save the planet. The norms associated with engaged citizenship privilege autonomy, ethical and moral responsibilities (Dalton, 2008), and mutual respect among individuals (Callan, 2004). Those who ascribe to engaged citizenship norms are more likely than others to participate in elite-challenging behavior and protests (Dalton, 2008).

Evidence suggests that young people engage heavily in "service politics" while they are less likely to take part in traditional forms of political engagement. Studies conducted in the current decade indicate that 80% or more of high school student take part in some form of volunteer work either on their own or as part of a service-learning/for-credit program through their educational institution. This percentage drops slightly to approximately 75% for college students and declines further to 68% six years after graduation (Vogelgesang and Astin, 2005). While some students engage in civic work to build their resumes, the majority do so of their own volition without expectations of a concrete payoff (Shea and Green, 2007). The greater emphasis on civic over political engagement coincides with the tendency for young Americans to embrace norms associated with engaged citizenship as opposed to duty-base citizenship–a trend that harkens back to the 1960s (Dalton, 2008).

There are a number of reasons why young people show greater enthusiasm for civic engagement than political engagement. Young people are turned off by the scandal-strewn

politics and uncivil behavior of leaders that has reached epic proportions in their lifetimes. They

do not feel as if the older politicians that populate higher office pay attention to their concerns

other than during elections when they are stumping for votes (Shea and Green, 2007), nor do

they believe that their actions can make a difference. In addition, young people lead lives that

are filled with non-political pursuits that increasingly include time-burning activities like

watching television (Putnam, 2000), surfing the internet, and text messaging friends. Political

participation may, in some instances, require a more sustained and informed effort than

volunteering. In addition, young people may be content enough with the political status quo that

they do not feel the need to engage (Shea and Green, 2007).

The most important factor influencing young people's tendency to engage in civic versus

political activities may be that the traditional mobilizing institutions of politics are not as strong

as they were in the past, nor are they especially interested in reaching out to young people.

Identification with a political party has been a persistent preoccupation of political socialization

researchers, with the assumption being that the strength of individuals' partisan attachment is an

indicator of their propensity to participate in politics. However, American party organizations do

not effectively organize policy and provide clear cues to citizens to aid in political decision-

making (Sapiro, 2004). Further, the youth divisions of political parties, particularly at the local

level, have been disappearing in the United States (Green and Shea, 2007) and cross-nationally

(Dalton, 2008). The professionalization of politics which has political consultants running

campaigns for office has worked to leave young people out of the loop. Youth are not recruited

as heavily by candidates to volunteer in campaigns as they were in the past. In addition, political

consultants are convinced that it is costly to get young voters out to the polls, and often advice

clients not reach out to them during elections (Owen, 2007).

The relationship between political and civic engagement and its implications for political

socialization has generated debate. Some scholars contend that distinguishing between the two

forms of engagement is erroneous as the activities that fall under both rubrics are inherently

political in nature. Others view civic participation as a bridge to political participation (Putnam,

2000; McLaren and Baird, 2003). Civic engagement acts as an invitation to community life

which can be crucial for establishing participatory norms (Schier, 2000). It provides individuals

with experience and skills, such as organizing, speaking in public, and raising funds, that are

necessary for taking part in political affairs. Volunteerism brings people together within

communities, and promotes group norms of cooperation and compromise (Putnam and Feldstein,

2003; Shea and Green, 2007). People involved with community groups are placed within larger

networks of activists who can recruit them for political activities. There is some empirical

evidence that youth voluntary organizations serve as agents of political socialization.

Involvement in voluntary associations that take part in community service, advocate on behalf of

issues, and work with disadvantaged groups encourages adult political participation, especially

electoral involvement (Teorell, 2003; McFarland and Thomas, 2006).

On the other side of the debate are those who believe that civic engagement has little, if

any, connection to political engagement or to the making of good democratic citizens. Hibbing

and Theiss-Morse contend that, "Voluntary groups perform wonderful services and have

undeniable value to society, but their effect on democratic politics is tenuous and possibly

negative" (2005: 244). They document the fact that many people choose to take part in civic

affairs so that they can work on behalf of their communities while avoiding the tainted practice

of politics. Participating in civic affairs can actually turn people off to politics when they have a

bad experience or run up against even routine obstacles to getting things done. Finally, many

groups do not pursue goals commensurate with democratic citizenship, such as fostering

meaningful deliberation on issues and leaders (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2004).

Political Socialization Research in the Twenty-first Century

The shifting perspective on youth engagement serves to illustrate how the limitations of political socialization inquiries may have led to overly-simplistic interpretations of complex trends. The evidence seems to suggest that we may be witnessing the advent of an era of increased engagement by young people, as well as citizens more generally, in civil and political society. This development coincides with the emergence of a new model of democracy that requires more of its citizens, especially in terms of providing greater inputs into the electoral and policy processes (Hooghe, 2004, Inglehart and Welzel, 2005). Dalton argues that changes in the social conditions in the United States and other western democracies have reshaped what it means to be a good citizen. He points to higher standards of living, rising levels of education, increased availability of information, a more active role for women in society, and increased social diversity as contributing to the transformation of citizenship norms. As a result, people are better equipped to be active citizens; they are less deferential to authority, they have more skills and resources, and they place greater emphasis on participating in the decisions affecting their lives (Dalton, 2008). At the same time, citizens have more mechanisms for engaging the polity than ever before, including through the use of new communications platforms (Owen, 2008).

How might political socialization scholars better address the pressing question: What makes a citizen in the twenty-first century? First, they need to carefully examine the existing data that comprise the baselines for previous generations in order to accurately assess stability and change. For example, researchers in the middle decades of the last century relegated the mass media to secondary status among the agencies of socialization, assigning them a minor, primarily reinforcing role in the politicization process. A second look at the data that led to this conclusion shows that the political knowledge, attentiveness to politics, and preferences of young

people as well as adults were influenced by media both directly and through the arbitration of other agents.

It is important that studies consider macro level system and societal factors when explaining cross-generational shifts in political socialization.[iii] Immigration and globalization have influenced the very fabric of political community, yet their treatment in studies has been superficial bordering on trivial. Examining the cross-cutting and transformative effects of immigration and globalization on the political socialization process presents particular challenges. Researching immigration effects requires rethinking core theoretical assumptions and developing empirical measures that are not simply recycled from studies of native-born citizens. In the United States, political socialization has been treated as a subfield of American politics, which helps to explain the parochial assumptions underpinning much research. As Sapiro points out, the "fundament problem for the field of political socialization as a whole is that its basic questions, theories, and conclusions about how people become part of the fabric of their political communities and how they develop their political orientations and practices are framed by observations of an excessively limited range of political contexts" (2004: 5).

The development of national identity and its implications for citizenship have not been studied much in the United States because scholars took for granted that immigrants would naturally want to identify as Americans, leaving their former nationalities behind (Sapiro, 2004). The assumption has been that immigrants will be 'resocialized' into American society, and adapt beliefs and behaviors of their native political system to conform to the norms of their adopted country. Reluctance to adapt will dissipate over time as immigrants gain greater exposure to the norms and practices of the dominant culture (White, et al., 2008). Our knowledge of how national identity forms in a multicultural era and how this reflects changing attachments to nation-states in incomplete at best. There is a need to examine how people might hold multiple

political identifies, memberships, and citizenships, and to explore the conditions under which these identities are mutually reinforcing and when they might conflict (Stepick and Stepick, 2002). For example, the political socialization of foreign-born school children differs markedly depending upon whether they attend schools that have high levels of diversity or those that are essentially segregated by ethnic group. Students who are isolated in segregated educational environments lack a connection to the mainstream culture and are less likely to develop norms of political participation (Ellen et al., 2002). To date, studies of immigrant populations, which concentrate primarily on Latinos and Asians, have focused on their identification with the Democratic and Republican parties, their stands on issues, their mobilization by political organizations, their development of political coalitions, and turnout in elections (Lee, Ramakrishnan, and Ramirez, 2006). Few studies document the political socialization of foreign-born youth outside the school context, nor trace the political development of immigrants over the life course.

Globalization has significant implications for political socialization that have been given only cursory treatment in research. Globalization fosters concentric circles of socialization which present people with a greater choice of citizen identities that are not necessarily based on birthright or kinship. People may identify in different ways with a nation, town, community, or group; they may be "directed from the local to the general, from particular to universal, from proximal to global entities, from state to supranational entities" (Birzea in Sapiro, 2004: 7). We can only begin to understand the complexities of these interlocking and overlapping identities by studying the process by which nationality becomes integrated into individuals' political orientations (Sapiro, 2004).

The international reach of globalization and the accompanying economic, political, and social interdependencies along with wide-reaching communication networks have brought to

light tensions between patriotism and cosmopolitanism. Allegiances to particular nations may be weakening as traditional state boundaries deteriorate and cross-state interactions become increasingly salient (Callan, 2004). Individuals may develop new allegiances based on 'communities of shared fate,' where membership is based not on identity with a nation or racial/ethnic community, but instead is founded mutual need and shared vulnerabilities (Williams, 2003). Issues surrounding the environment and global warming, food and agriculture, military intervention, poverty, and racism, have led people to perceive that their destinies are enmeshed with those of others existing outside of their own country and culture. Commensurate with these potential shifts in attitudes, scholars should consider the role of supranational institutions in the political socialization of global citizens (Callan, 2004; Sapiro, 2004).

In addition to exploring the implications of macro level factors, scholars need to rethink the ways in which they study the agents of political socialization. Research has focused heavily on a limited set of agents that are hypothesized to have a significant impact on the political learning process. The family, school, peer group, and mass media are the "big four" agencies that have commanded the bulk of attention despite the fact that research findings leave much left to explain. Even within these heavily-researched agencies, scholars have focused inordinately on some contexts to the exclusion of others. School-based research tends to concentrate on white, middle class schools and colleges, while trade schools and those serving lower socio-economic class students receive less attention. Youth voting organizations operate in the much same way, targeting college students and virtually ignoring trade school students and young working citizens.

A more expansive set of agencies needs to be examined in order to get the total picture. Religious institutions, the military, the workplace, correctional facilities, entertainment organizations, interest groups, political organizations, social clubs, sports, and online

communities, to name a few, can be instrumental for political socialization when they hold an important place in individuals' life. In addition, researchers need to look beyond the obvious political venues for evidence of what Steve Ward of the University of Salford terms 'politics in other places.' For example, a great deal of meaningful political discussion takes places inadvertently on sports and entertainment talk boards. Communities of fans who have developed a level of comfort with one another branch out beyond the designated topic of the board to engage in discourse about leaders and issues.

Further, research needs to provide more precise specifications about the role of agents in the socialization process under particular conditions. Even after decades of scholarship on the family, little is known about the dynamics underpinning the political socialization process. An exception is Chaffee et al.'s (1971) seminal work on family communication patterns and the small cottage industry of research it sparked. This research demonstrated that different types of family dynamics could explain variations in childhood politicization. Rudimentary differences in the school context–public versus private, large versus small, urban versus rural–have been linked to variations in political socialization. But, we need to know more about the conditions under which learning experiences will successfully convey political and civic orientations to young people. The extent to which children are segregated from adult activities related to politics influences their intent to engage later in life. "Real life" school and service learning exercises that allow young people to meaningfully engage the political and civic community as opposed to simulations or "play" appear to be effective socializing experiences, although much more evidence is required (Sapiro, 2004).

The relative prominence of particular agents in the socialization process over time should be assessed. Although American politics is characterized more by stability than change, the importance of traditional agents has shifted and new agencies have appeared on the scene. The

vast majority of Americans do not come into direct contact with political party organizations and identification with parties has been weak for decades.[iv] Only about 6% of young people participate in party and candidate campaign organizations during a given election (Sitarman and Warren, 2003). Yet, partisanship remains the most consistently researched variable in socialization studies. The conclusion generally drawn from this research is that young Americans, especially, have withdrawn from the political realm. In fact, people are increasingly affiliating with issue and cause related organizations outside of the rubric of party.

The most significant development warranting the attention of scholars may be the influence of technology on twenty-first century political socialization. If we view socialization as primarily a communications process, technology has fundamentally altered the core mechanisms that sustain the enterprise. The means by which people receive and process information has been essentially altered. Communication takes place more through technological intermediaries than via face-to-face contact. Each generation of intermediaries serves the conflicting purposes of placing greater distance between communicators while at the same time keeping them in closer touch. Text messaging, which often substitutes for phone calls, allows texters to send many short missives to recipients with ease, yet is devoid of the humanity of the voice message. New communications technologies have allowed people, especially younger citizens, to form their own groups that meet and act both digitally and offline. Social media have been used to generate virtual organizations that attract thousands of members (Owen, 2008). There is some evidence that young people are developing their political identities online, and that these identities are consistent with the norms of engaged citizenship (Bennett, 2008).

In many ways, the 2008 presidential election showcases some of the key characteristics of twenty-first century political socialization. It has brought to light the need for socialization scholars to take more innovative approaches to research and to cast aside persistent stereotypes

that have underpinned research. The election, especially the nominating campaign, provided a platform for young people to demonstrate their political commitment. Since 2004 when 49% of 18 to 29 year olds (20.1 million people) cast a ballot, young voters have become more involved in election campaigns (Lopez, et al., 2005). The trend continued with the 2006 midterm election, as a massive voter registration drive spearheaded primarily by nonpartisan youth voting organizations recruited over a half a million new voters and young voter turnout rose by 24% over the 2002 figures (Owen, 2007). During the 2008 presidential nominating campaign, turnout among 18-29 year old voters was higher than in the 2004 contest in every state. Turnout was especially significant in early contests in Iowa (13%) and New Hampshire (49%) as well as in battleground states like Florida (13%), Ohio (25%), and Pennsylvania (14%). Over 6.5 million young voters turned out in what are typically a low involvement elections (www.CIRCLE.org). The demographic shifts in American society also are reflected in the engagement of the electorate in 2008, as ethnic voters, such as Hispanics, are participating at higher rates, especially younger, educated citizens who recognize the potential for their vote to make a difference in the outcome of the election.

In many ways, young people have laid the cornerstone of the twenty-first century election campaign. They have employed Web 2.0 innovations to work on behalf of candidates both inside and outside of the formal confines of campaign organizations, and have created a spontaneous grassroots movement. They have used social media, like Facebook and MySpace, and video streaming sites, like YouTue, to generate and disseminate content through networks of friends and associates. They have engaged new media to recruit like-minded individuals to work on behalf of candidates. They also have become a visible part of the media surrounding the campaign as citizen journalists, bloggers, and video producers. Scoop08.com, for example, is an online newspaper whose content is provided entirely by hundreds junior high, high school, and

college students working with some of the best editors in the business.

Conclusion

Studying how political socialization takes place in society is like aiming at a target that is in perpetual motion. Predicting what kind of citizen will emerge from the actions of socializing agents presents an eternal challenge for scholars and educators. There is a need for innovation in socialization scholarship, both in terms of developing theory and more refined empirical referents, in order to better explain political socialization in the twentieth century and its implications for citizenship. Important questions beg to be addressed, including: How do you teach civic skills to a diverse citizenry? How do you deal with citizens of a global community with shared interests versus those who privilege national identity and allegiances? How will technology influence the development of citizen identities, beliefs, values, and participation? Decades of research has merely scratched the surface of the complex phenomenon of political socialization, and the opportunities to advance the field are myriad and exciting.

Endnotes

iNoteworthy exceptions include Alwin, et al.'s (1991) study of the women who attended Bennington College in the 1930's and 1940s, tracing their political development over the course of fifty years, and Delli Carpini's (1986) research on the sixties generation.

iiA 2001 Pew Research Center study revealed similar results, as 1% felt that young people had a strong sense of right and wrong and 76% believed that they did not (Pew Research Center, 2005; Galston, 2007).

iiiInglehart's career-long comparative project examining the impacts of cultural shifts on individual level political orientations is an example of this type of research. The empirical work is based on the World Values Survey which accumulates data on seventy-eight countries (see Inglehart 1977, 1990, 1997, 2005).

ivIn 2008, more than one-third of the electorate consists of Independents or people uncommitted to a party. 16% of young people called themselves Independents, down from 23% in 2006, while 47% identified with the Democratic Party and 28% with the Republican Party (Lake and Tarrance, 2008). It is important to note that a sizable proportion of those who affiliated with a party are weak identifiers whose party identification is volatile.

References

Almond, Gabriel A. 1960. "A Functional Approach to Comparative Politics," in Gabriel A. Almond and James S. Coleman (eds.), *The Politics of Developing Areas*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press: 26-33.

Almond, Gabriel A., and Sidney Verba. 1963. *The Civic Culture*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Alwin, Duane F., Ronald L. Cohen, and Theodore M. Newcomb. 1991. *Political Attitudes Over the Life Span*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

Bachen, Christine, Chad Raphael, Kathleen M. Lynn, Kristen McKee, and Jessica Philippi. 2008. "Civic Engagement, Pedagogy, and Information Technology on Web Sites for Youth," *Political Communication,* vol. 25: 290-310.

Beck, Paul Allen. 1977. "The Role of Agents in Political Socialization," in Stanley Allen Renshon (ed.), *Handbook of Political Socialization Theory and Research*. New York: The Free Press: 115-142.

Bennett, W. Lance. 2008. "Civic Learning Online: Responding to the Generational Shift in Citizen Identity," *Around the CIRCLE*, vol. 5: 1-2.

Chaffee, Steven H., Jack M. McLeod, and Charles K. Atkin. 1971. "Parental Influences on Adolescent Media Use," *American Behavioral Scientist*, vol. 14: 323-340.

Dalton, Russell J. 2008. *The Good Citizen*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Delli Carpini, Michael X. 1986. *Stability and Change in American Politics*. New York: New York University Press.

Dudley, Robert L., and Alan R. Gitelson. 2003. "Civic Education, Civic Engagement, and Youth Civic Development," *PS: Political Science & Politics*, April, vol. 36, no. 2: 263-267.

Ehrlich, Thomas. 2000. "Preface," in Thomas Ehrlich, *Civic Responsibility and Higher Education*. New York: Oxford University Press: i-xxiv.

Ellen, Ingrid Gould, Katherine O'Regan, Amy Ellen Schwartz, and Leanna Stiefel. 2002. "Immigrant Children and New York City Schools: Segregation and Its Consequences," *Brookings-Wharton Papers on Urban Affairs.*

Galston, William A. 2001. "Political Knowledge, Political Engagement, and Civic Education," *Annual Review of Political Science*, vol. 4: 217-234.

Galston, William A. 2007. "Civic Knowledge, Civic Education, and Civic Engagement," in Daniel M. Shea ad John C. Green, *Fountain of Youth*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield: 95-114.

Green, John C., and Daniel M. Shea. 2007. "Throwing a Better Party: Local Political Parties and the Youth Vote," in Daniel M. Shea ad John C. Green, *Fountain of Youth*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield: 21-48..

Hooghe, Marc. 2004. "Political Socialization and the Future of Politics," *Acta Politica,* vol. 39: 331-341.

Inglehart, Ronald. 1977. *The Silent Revolution*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Inglehart, Ronald. 1990. *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Inglehart, Ronald. 1997. *Modernization and Postmodernization*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Inglehart, Ronald, and Christian Welzel. 2005. *Modernization, Cultural Change and Democracy*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Lake Research Partners and The Tarrance Group. 2008. *Rock The Vote Young Voter Poll*, February 28, 2008 (http://www.rockthevote.com/research/).

Lee, Taeku, S. Karthick Ramakrishnan, and Ricardo Ramirez, eds. 2006. *Transforming Politics, Transforming America*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press.

Lopez, Mark Hugo, Emily Kirby, and Jared Sagoff. 2005. "The Youth Vote 2004: Fact Sheet," College Park, MD: Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement. (http://www.civicyouth.org).

Marshall, Gordon. 1998. "Political Socialization," in *A Dictionary of Sociology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

McFarland, Daniel A., and Reuben J. Thomas. 2006. "Bowling Young: How Youth Voluntary Associations Influence Adult Political Participation," *American Sociological Review*, vol. 71, no. 3: 401-425.

McLaren, Lauren, and Vanessa Baird. 2003. "Growing Trust: The Role of Communal Participation in the Creation of Interpersonal Trust," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Philadelphia, PA.

Milner, Henry. 2007. "Political Knowledge Among Young Canadians and Americans," Institute for Research on Public Policy Working Paper Series, no. 2007-01. Quebec: IRPP.

Owen, Diana. 2004. "Citizenship and Civic Education in the United States," paper presented at the Conference on Civic Education and Politics in Democracies: Comparing International Approaches to Educating New Citizens, cosponsored by the Center for Civic Education and the Bundeszentrale for Politische Bildung, San Diego, CA, September 26-October 1, 2004.

Owen, Diana. 2007. "Report: Interviews with Political Elites, Opinion Leaders, and Journalists About Young Voters," for the Pew Charitable Trusts and The George Washington University School of Political Management.
Owen, Diana. 2008. "Election Media and Youth Political Engagement," *SOWI-Online Jounal*, *Special Issue: Making Politics Visible* (www.ph-ludwigsburg.de/7657.html.)

Pew Research Center for the People & the Press. 2005. "Support for Tougher Indecency Measures, but Worries About Government Intrusiveness," April 19. Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center.

Putnam, Robert D. 2000. *Bowling Alone*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Putnam, Robert D., and Lewis M. Feldstein. 2003. *Better Together*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Roh, Young-Ran. 2004. "Democratic Citizenship Education in the Information Age: A Comparative Study of South Korea and Australia," *Asian Pacific Education Review*, vol. 5, no. 2: 167-177.

Sapiro, Virginia. 2004. "Not Your Parents' Political Socialization: Introduction for a New Generation," *Annual Review of Political Science*, vol. 7: 1-23.

Schier, Steven E. 2000. *By Invitation Only*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Shea, Daniel M., and John C. Green. 2007. "The Turned-Off Generation: Fact and Fiction?" in Daniel M. Shea ad John C. Green, *Fountain of Youth*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield: 3-20.

Sherrod, Lonnie R., Constance Flanagan, and James Youniss. 2002. "Dimensions of Citizenship and Opportunities for Youth Development: The What, Why, When, Where, and Who of Citizenship Development," *Applied Developmental Science*, vol. 6, no. 2: 264-272.

Sitaraman, Ganesh, and Warren Previn. 2003. *Invisible Citizens*. Lincoln, NE: iUniverse.

Stepick, Alex, and Carol Dutton Stepick. 2002. "Becoming American, Constructing Ethnicity: Immigrant Youth and Civic Engagement," *Applied Developmental Science*, vol. 6, no. 4: 246-257.

Strachan, J. Cherie. 2007. "Building Youth Party Identification and Revitalizing Democracy," in Daniel M. Shea ad John C. Green, *Fountain of Youth*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield: 79-93.

Theiss-Morse, Elizabeth, and John R. Hibbing. 2005. "Citizenship and Civic Engagement," *Annual Review of Political Science*, vo. 8: 227-49.

Teorell, Jan. 2003. "Linking Social Capital to Political Participation: Voluntary Associations and Networks of Recruitment in Sweden," *Scandinavian Political Studies*, vol. 26: 49-66.

Torney-Purta, Judith. 2002. "The School's Role in Developing Civic Engagement: A Study of Adolescents in Twenty-Eight Countries," *Applied Developmental Science*, vol. 6, no. 4: 203-212.

Vogelgesang, Lori, and Alexander W. Astin. 2005. "Post-College Civic Engagement Among Graduates," Higher Education Research Institute Report Number 2, April, University of California, Los Angeles.

Wattenberg, Martin. 2007. *Is Voting for Young People?* New York: Longman.

Williams, Melissa S. 2003. "Citizenship as Identity, Citizenship as Shared Fate, and the Functions of Multicultural Education," in Kevin McDonough and Walter Feinberg, *Citizenship and Education in Liberal-Democratic Societies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 208-247.

White, Stephen, Neil Nevitte, Andre Blais, Elisabeth Gidengil, and Patrick Fournier. 2008. "The Political Resocialization of Immigrants: Resistance or Lifelong Learning?" *Political Research Quarterly*, vol. 61, no. 2: 268-281.