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orientations of children, and later 'youth', led one researcher (Greenstein 1970) to include the study of children as one basic definition of the field. These twin related pillars, the moulding of citizens to norms (in reality those of the political regime and particular political authorities) and the focus on children, were the basis of much of the research undertaken in the field.

The understanding of 'socialization' as a conservative process has a long intellectual history. Clausen (1968:21) notes that as early as 1828 the term appeared in the *Oxford English Dictionary* with the meaning 'to render social, to make fit for living in society'. Early definitions in the field followed this lead and stressed the child's accommodation to the adult world, particularly the normative values of the society. Hyman's view that 'humans must learn their political behaviour early and well and persist in it' (Hyman 1959:17) was echoed in many theories. Sigel's observation that 'political socialization refers to the learning process by which the political norms and behaviours acceptable to an ongoing political system are transmitted from generation to generation' (Sigel 1961:1) was one of several influential views of the process that took this position.

This view has persisted, although not unchallenged, to the present. For example, Allen, in introducing a recent symposium on 'Children's political socialization and cognition' in *Human Development* (Allen 1989:2), defines the process as 'an individual's adaptation to the political environment'. Less emphasis has generally been given to the ways in which individuals selectively accept, develop and shape political orientations. Similarly, insufficient attention has been given to the ways in which individuals may influence and shape the very social and political systems that supposedly socialize them to regime support.

From the beginning there has been dissatisfaction with the view that individuals are generally passive accommodators to institutional norms. Reservations about this view were expressed quite early in the field's development (Connell and Goot 1972-3) and continued to be expressed periodically (Sears 1975; Renshon 1977). Criticisms of this view took several forms.

Connell and Goot (1972-3) argued that the forced-choice format of the research methodology imposed a structure on the children's answers which tended to suppress the expression of their full range of understandings. He pointed out that Greenstein and Tarrow's study of children using semi-projective and open-ended questions (Greenstein and Tarrow 1970) had revealed that children know more about 'political realities' than they could express in a typical forced-choice format. Sears (1975:95) pointed out that socialization models tended to overlook the child's idiosyncratic growth, while Renshon's analysis of the basic assumptions behind models of political learning (Renshon 1977:22-40) detailed exactly why this criticism was well taken.

The most telling argument by far against the conformity to social norms model, however, was the rise of student activism in the 1960s and 1970s by the very same cohorts who had provided researchers with evidence of early support for political authorities. Clearly something had changed. Early research (for example, Greenstein 1965; Hess and Törney 1969) had found that children, especially those in the political and economic mainstream, had a 'positivity bias' in favour of authority. While there was some controversy about whether these findings were an artefact of method (see the discussions in Sullivan and Minns 1976; Greenstein 1976; and Maddox and Handberg 1979), the general consensus was that these findings tended to support the view of the socialization process as developing 'diffuse support', although there were some research caveats to these general findings.

Research on children who were not integrated into the economic and political mainstream, for example American children in economically depressed Southern rural areas (Jaros *et al.* 1968), found that they were substantially less supportive of the political authorities and more alienated from the political and social system. In some cases, economic or political marginality did not lead to wholesale alienation from the political system. Greenberg (1970), for example, found that, while black children were less likely to support political leaders and some governmental institutions than were a comparative sample of white children, they were still generally supportive of the Supreme Court, a finding which the authors plausibly argue reflected the court's long involvement in civil rights. This study is not only important because it examined black children, but in addition because it showed that even among children learning could be selective.

A similar dynamic was uncovered in studies of children's responses to the Watergate crisis. Atherton (1975), for example, found that children's positive evaluations of political leaders and institutions were negatively influenced by the Watergate scandals. This finding was supported by Meadow's two-wave panel study, which uncovered a decline in children's support for the President (Meadow 1982) as more damaging evidence became public. These findings should have made the unexpected activism of the 1960s and 1970s less mysterious, since it suggested that even children could and did respond to changes in the political environment.

In retrospect, it seems clear that students of political socialization erred in focusing primarily on explaining political stability and continuity. This was a plausible and understandable focus given the politics of that period, but socialization theory paid a price for its failure to place that particular period in American politics within a larger historical context. Had that been done, stability (although not necessarily continuity) might have been seen as less of a rule and more the product of a particular set of historical and political circumstances, which themselves were in need of analysis.

As noted, the focus on childhood was dictated in part by the theory of the origins of diffuse support, but this is not the only reason. The focus on childhood was probably influenced as much by the lack of alternative models of development after childhood as it was by the theoretical requirements of systems theory. Although Erikson's eight-stage theory of psychological development, extending from childhood through adulthood, had been published in 1950, its implications for political socialization were not appreciated or integrated for many years. The same could be said of other models of development in adulthood (Levinson 1978; Gilligan 1982). In the first major review of the topic of 'adult political socialization', Sigel wrote that 'there does not exist as yet a theory of adult political socialization' (Sigel 1977:261). Twelve years later, the first major book on adult political socialization has been published with its editor, Sigel, noting:

Attention to political socialization over the entire life span—especially attention to adult development—broadly defined—is still the exception rather than the rule. While we do have much information about how adults at a given moment act or react...we lack systematic knowledge of whether such behaviour is a carry-over from values learned during childhood or whether it has arisen in response to changed social or personal circumstances not anticipated in childhood.

(Sigel 1989:x)

The absence of alternative theories and the implications of the political theory of political socialization led research to focus on childhood. The numerous studies of this period of political development uncovered basic and previously unknown information about the process, but ran into several difficulties. At first, large numbers of studies concentrated on uncovering the dynamics of children's attitudes towards authority (in keeping with the theory of diffuse support). However, questions were soon raised about whether children had attitudes at all. Vaillancourt (1973) found so much variability in children's responses over time that she questioned whether political attitudes were the appropriate level of childhood socialization analysis. Others had doubts too. Knutson (1974) suggested that rather than attitudes, 'pre-political ideologies' might be the appropriate unit of childhood analysis, while Renshon (1974) argued that analysis of children's 'basic beliefs' about the nature of the social and political world might prove productive.

But there was a more basic problem to be addressed. Meadow's panel study (Meadow 1982) suggested that even when one could reliably measure political attitudes in children there was evidence that these attitudes could change and develop. These changes were not related to the failure to develop and consolidate attitudes, as Vaillancourt had suggested was true for her younger panel sample, but rather because there was a dynamic relationship between the child's views and his/her understanding of and reaction to external political events.

The importance of this finding is that it underscores the fact that the *political* theory of political socialization put forward as the most important rationale for the field had paradoxically failed to take into account the importance of actual political events. These research findings further suggested that in addition to trying to find models which linked childhood learning with adult political activity, one would need to account, independent of that objective, for changes and development in childhood itself. This is still an area in need of exploration.

POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION: CONTROVERSY AND DEVELOPMENT

The general question of impact

At the core of the political socialization debate are questions about the impact of the process. Somewhat paradoxically, the same research has both established the existence for the political socialization process, and begun to uncover the extent and nature of its impact. Yet many more questions are raised about the latter than the former.

One must, at the beginning, distinguish between potential and actual impact. The fact that some children's books, for example, may contain 'anti-authority' messages (Cook 1983) does not in and of itself confer importance. Children may not read such books, or, if they do, they may remain unaffected by them. Thus the question of impact can only be answered by establishing some relational connection. Establishing this connection has frequently been approached through the analysis of correspondence, that is the extent to which various relational permutations (for example, parent-child, person-institution, etc.) correspond.

One can conceive of at least three possible levels of impact. The first, an individual level, would look for the impact of socialization on the development of a person's individual orientations. The second, the group/institutional level, would look to small aggregates of individuals to see how particular clusters of individuals developed politically. This level might also seek to tie such group development to the operation of specific contexts or aspects of institutional functioning. Lastly, we can examine the functioning of the polity itself for evidence of socialization effects.

As noted above (p. 443), the promise of political socialization for many political scientists was to be found in its ability to document a set of causal relationships between political socialization and systematic functioning. This has proved difficult to accomplish. Aside from difficulties in terminology, definition and operationalization of the main terms involved (for example, 'stability', 'persistence', etc.), the fundamental dilemma of linking the field's accomplishment to this particular requirement has been the daunting level-of-

analysis problem. This problem is not unique to political socialization theory, but it is more central to its premisses. The question, briefly put, is how can studies, most of which are done at the individual level of analysis, be aggregated to account for systemic effects?

Even when we examine some of the nationally representative samples that have been very influential and informative in political socialization, questions of systemic effects are not unambiguous. Himmelweit, for example, in discussing the Jennings and Niemi panel study points out that stability at the aggregate level may occur either 'because people's views haven't changed or because people's views have changed but in different ways with the result that changes at the aggregate level cancel each other out' (Himmelweit 1983:247). And of course, the empirical determination of stability and change in a sample is not necessarily synonymous with the use of these terms to characterize the operation of political systems.

Problems in this area have proved difficult given that a majority of studies in the field are neither nationally representative nor designed as panel studies. Inference in these cases therefore becomes tricky. Do we simply sum up the results of the survey or other research findings and generalize them across the whole system? Is there some kind of step level, or critical mass function, which will accelerate the effects we uncover? Is the impact of the various dynamics uncovered interactive? And what is to be done with issues of individual and collective change over time, and in response to changes in circumstance? Simply to state these questions underscores the enormous complexity of the problems involved. That these problems have not been solved by political socialization is not surprising. Other areas of social science inquiry have fared no better.

One by-product of the attempt to forge aggregate linkages has been that less attention has been paid to making individual or 'mid-range' (Merton 1968) linkages. These are effects that might be felt at the institutional level, without necessarily having dramatic effects on the overall functioning of the system. For example, a rise in the level of sceptical reactions to political leaders after political experiences like Watergate might lead to an emphasis on 'honesty' and 'integrity' as campaign themes. This, in turn, might even result in somewhat more actual political behaviour of this kind. However, it is probably too much to require of socialization theory that in order to prove its worth all or most political leaders must become dramatically more honest in response to more sceptical socialization. Would the effect of greater honesty be less of an impact than a step-level change in the behaviour of all political office-holders? Of course. Is there no discernible or important socialization effect in this example because the latter has not occurred? I think not.

Finally, in addition to the aggregate and institutional level of political socialization effects, there is the impact of socialization on individuals. Of course,

discussions of impact at both the societal and institutional level assume individual-level impact. But it is at this level of analysis that research documenting the effects of political socialization is the most substantial and convincing.

Research demonstrating individual-level effects has actually proceeded along two tracks. The first is simply the basic documentation of the fact that children do have a wide range of political orientations. This fact, first demonstrated in the early studies of Greenstein (1960), Hess and Easton (1960) and others, is now taken for granted, but its implications are important and worth pausing a moment to consider. If children as young as four and five have the beginnings of political understandings (however much they may evolve) and if these understandings are not innate, then a strong logical case has been made for the reality of political learning. This is important because whatever debates there are in the field, and there are many (who learns what, how, when, under what circumstances and to what degree), there is empirical evidence that there is something to explain.

The empirical demonstration that political learning exists, as important as it is, is but a first step. The next steps are to gain an appreciation of the areas affected by the process as well as to understand the nature of the process itself. In the first of these two areas, especially, the empirical demonstration of effects in a variety of areas and contexts has been significant. For example, there is by now a large body of evidence to support the proposition that parents do have an impact on the political views of their children (Jennings and Niemi 1968; Cundy 1982), an indication of impact being a correlation between the political orientations of different family members when these orientations are independently sampled. But these are not the only kinds of studies that have documented individual-level impact. Chapman (1987), studying a sample of women candidates for political office in Scotland, found that having been part of a women's group was the strongest and best predictor of these candidates' political orientations. Using a causal model she concludes that 'there is no doubt that the effect we are measuring is that of experience on consciousness, and not the other way around' (Chapman 1987:323).

Finally, Zaslavsky and an unnamed (for reasons of personal safety) colleague (Zaslavsky and Z. 1980) studied Soviet workers' support for their country's invasion of Czechoslovakia. They found that workers in 'closed enterprises' (industries that produce something deemed strategically important by the government) were much more likely to support the invasion than those who worked in relatively 'open' industries. Related to workers in 'closed' industries were party membership, past military service, higher pay and special status. They interpreted their findings in terms of 'embeddedness' in the regime, a concept which is consonant with the cumulative effects model of socialization that we will discuss later (see page 459).

Overall, these and numerous other empirical studies have documented the existence of socialization effects. However, these effects have been more effectively documented at the individual and group/institutional levels. Documented effects at the social level remain largely inferential.

Specification: the maturing of political socialization models

It may well be one hallmark of social science fields that in the beginning they put forward rather global and relatively undifferentiated theories and models. These may take the form of general if-then propositions, inference from smaller studies to larger effects, or simply a set of models which purport to describe general processes but which in hindsight and on the basis of accumulated research experience are shown to be much more complex and differentiated than originally thought.

Specification, then, is a process by which these original formulations of a field are modified on the basis of research findings. To the sceptical, such a process looks as if the original formulations have been found wanting (they have), and that therefore the whole enterprise is suspect. A different view is put forward here. Specification of process to take account of context, individual and developmental differences, and so on, represents a maturing of social/ political theory, not its demise. We will illustrate this process in political socialization theory in this section by looking more closely at the question of impact and the models which have been developed to account for it. We begin with an examination of the question of the persistence of socialization effects over time.

The necessity to develop models of persistence stem from the logical requirements imposed by systems theory and the fact that politics is most frequently the province of adults. Some have put the matter forcefully. Dowse argues, for example, that political socialization research 'makes sense *only* if the child is father to the man' (Dowse 1978:403). Still, it is true that, while children's political learning may be of interest in and of itself, it becomes more important for research and analysis if it can be shown to influence or shape adult political behaviour (not necessarily the operation of the political system) in some ways. Therefore, the effects of socialization must be found not only to originate early in the life cycle, but to persist in some form over it.

These requirements are the basis of two of the most well-known models of impact in the literature: the primacy principle (Searing *et al.* 1976) and the structuring principle (Searing *et al.* 1973). Taken together, these principles suggest: (a) that crucial political learning takes place in childhood; (b) that this early learning is a filter (structures) through which subsequent political learning passes; and (c) that these crucial behaviours, acquired in childhood, persist into adulthood to influence adult political behaviour. These are basic principles

which Searing and his colleagues note 'everyone subscribes to...in varying degrees' (Searing *et al.* 1973:415).

As noted, political socialization research has found pervasive evidence that assumption (a) is correct. Children do begin to develop political attitudes, political information and policy opinions, identifications with political parties, pre-political ideologies, basic beliefs, and so on. But whether and to what degree these orientations structure subsequent learning and persist through time are other matters.

The fate of these two principles suggest the ways that failures to substantiate early, generally formulated theoretical assumptions can lead to developments in theory specification. Consider in this regard one empirical test of the structuring principle. Searing and his colleagues tested the structuring hypothesis with cohort data by seeing whether political attitudes acquired in childhood could predict later political opinions. They did not. From this they conclude 'that the primacy principle is surely overstated' (Searing *et al.* 1976:94). In this they are no doubt correct. But on the other hand does 'approval of police officers', or 'approval of conservatives' constitute the basic orientations discussed in the literature? And is there some compelling reason why approval of police officers should be correlated with an individual's position on admission of China into the United Nations (Searing *et al.* 1973:423)?

The emphasis on attitudes is one that political scientists find particularly comfortable and has been the basis for much early work in political socialization. Even Hess and Torney (1969), who argue that the main product of early socialization is a generalized attachment to the political system, state their case in terms of attitudes. But why should we expect attitudes to be the key element of what is learned in childhood? It makes much more intuitive sense, and appears to fit better with the findings of political learning, to suggest that more global beliefs (Knutson's 'pre-political ideologies' (1974) or Renshon's 'basic beliefs' (1974) for example) would be the building blocks of subsequent political orientations. And if 'ideology', with its implications of a coherent, interrelated system of beliefs, appears too cognitively and developmentally advanced, one could begin to use the concept of 'schema', to address questions raised by the primacy and structuring principles (Peterson and Somit 1981-2: 325-6).

In some respects, however, the concept of structuring does not go directly to the heart of the question at the core of political socialization's research premises, that of persistence itself. If what is learned during childhood does not persist to shape adult politics, a basic premiss of the field has proved untenable. Yet, for a concept so central to the field's rationale and development, early models of persistence were surprisingly general in their formulation.

Early political learning was simply expected to persist relatively unchanged through adulthood. In this form the theory is relatively undifferentiated. It does not

specify exactly which orientations learned in childhood are expected to persist and which are not. Nor does it go very far in distinguishing the many possible meanings of persistence: it is possible that orientations may persist in most important respects, but not remain static. Sears, for example, suggests such a possibility in his review of some data on the transmission of racism from fathers to sons. He cites evidence that suggests that 'a latent racism had been passed on and retained over the years, but was manifested in different forms' (Sears 1990:84).

In retrospect, the model of 'unchanging persistence' was a theoretically naïve expectation, and the fact that it has not fully held up should come as no great surprise. One source of this expectation can be traced to a selective reading of psychoanalytic theory. In that theory, unconscious childhood conflicts were theorized to persist relatively unchanged into adulthood, resulting in wide ranges of adult behaviour.

The only problem with borrowing this formulation is that unconscious conflicts are not a suitable model of political orientations. Most of the latter, unlike the former, are conscious, relatively unconflicted, and clearly responsive to changes in individual development and situational dynamics. The 'repetition compulsion' familiar to psychoanalysts hardly describes the evolution of the child's political world in which cognitive development, modelling and learning from experience (to name just three mechanisms of political learning and change) are the rule, not the exception.

Not unexpectedly, findings that political learning and development take place throughout the life cycle have forced the refinement of this theory. Connell (1971) interviewed 119 children aged from five to sixteen in Australia and found that between ages five and seven is a period of 'intuitive thinking' about politics, with children moving somewhat freely between political fact and fantasy. Between seven and nine a stage of primitive realism develops, between nine and twelve the children actually begin to construct their political world; and between twelve and sixteen they become able to engage in abstract political thought. Based on these findings, Connell argues that the political world of the young child is too much in a process of development to expect that it will 'persist' through adulthood.

Moore and his colleagues (Moore *et al.* 1985) reported the results of a longitudinal study of American children. They began their study with children in kindergarten and then reinterviewed them every year up until the fourth grade and reported their results. The authors demonstrated clearly that children do develop their political views over time. Indeed, they found evidence of a clear cognitive progression of children's political understanding, as suggested by Piaget's general model. Yet they did not find evidence for some of that theory's general hypotheses regarding children's thinking, namely that they are unable to think abstractly before about the fourth grade.

In Britain, Himmelweit *et al.* (1981) reported the results of an extended panel study begun with a group of men in 1951 when they were 13–14 years old, and then reinterviewed again in 1962, 1964, 1966, 1970 and 1974. That study was centred around voting, but also collected enormous amounts of data about a variety of political and social views. They found ‘many of the attitudes to be remarkably stable over the eight-year period’, but surprisingly this did not extend to the act of voting. Of interest to us here is that only 31 per cent of the sample voted the same way on all six occasions (Himmelweit 1983:241). Himmelweit’s model of socialization and voting preference gives more weight to situational determinants of such choice, a view in keeping with political learning as having an important situationally specific dimension.

Finally, Jennings and Marcus (1984) analysed the results of a three-wave panel study conducted in the years 1965, 1973 and 1982 and focused on party identification and electoral choice. They found much more variability in the younger cohorts compared to their parents, yet, in the years between 1973 and 1982 partisan stability among the younger group increased dramatically. Jennings and Marcus put forward ‘a political experience’ model in which as a person gathers political experience his/her political orientations tend to crystallize.

These and other studies have all documented what appears to be a fundamental fact of the socialization process, variability *within* and *across* stages of development. This leads to a view of the political socialization process as ‘development in progress’. The rule at each stage of development and for each set of orientations seems to be ‘incompleteness’, rather than completion. No agency, or set of agencies, has been documented in the USA or any other country (including authoritarian regimes) to fully form or shape political orientations.

These findings raise a more general issue concerning the need to develop models which explain change and development, and not just correspondence. It is therefore one sign of theoretical development in political socialization that continuing questions about undifferentiated theories of impact have prompted a whole new generation of models. Sears (1990), for example, recently discussed three new models of persistence, which he compares with the traditional mode which asserts that ‘the residues of early socialization are relatively immune to change in latter years’. One new model is the *life-long openness* model, which asserts that ‘age is irrelevant for attitude change’; a second model, the *life-cycle* view, suggests that ‘persons are particularly susceptible to adapting particular dispositions at certain life stages’; and a third model, the *impressionable years* model, suggest that ‘any dispositions are unusually vulnerable in late adolescence and early adulthood given strong enough pressure to change’ (*ibid.*: 77).

The importance of these models may ultimately be not in their mutually exclusive accuracy, but in their attempts to come to grips with the problems of

persistence and change in the political socialization process. Even these 'second generation' models contain some ambiguities, which suggest the need for further specification. Sapiro, for example, in reviewing these models, finds some ambiguity in the use of the term 'life-cycle' (Sapiro 1990:4). She points out that this term may have two different (but not necessarily unrelated) meanings, with different implications for studies of persistence and change: one would imply that change is a natural consequence of ageing itself; the other that it is a consequence of socially constructed 'expected' life events. A question that arises given this differentiation is what specific kinds of orientations are expected to change in each model.

Other models of persistence and impact have been put forward. One of the best of these is the 'cumulative effects' model put forward by Langton (1984). Langton reanalysed the Almond-Verba five-nation study and also presented data of his own from a random sample of interviews with 494 workers in the central Andes in Peru. His strategy was to assess the impact of family, school and jobs, not to see which contributes most to socialization but to see what effects continuity and discontinuity of experience had on the development of particular political orientations like political efficacy.

Not surprisingly perhaps, he found that similar experiences in home, school and work tended to have a cumulative effect. That is, growing up in a non-repressive family, and then attending a school which encouraged participation, and then going into a job in which independence was valued tended to result in individuals having the highest levels of political confidence. When respondents were reared in a repressive home (associated with low political efficacy), but then went on to a school setting which encouraged efficacy, their efficacy scores increased by 17 points. However, when this same group was then subjected to a repressive work environment, their efficacy scores plunged 35 points.

New models alone, however, while crucial to the field's continuing development, will not fully address the needs of political socialization theory and research by themselves. There must be new data too. This is said with the knowledge that the behavioural movement in political science has been criticized for its emphasis on data collection, measurement and statistical analysis. This movement has also been criticized for being ahistorical, non-contextual, and too concerned with drawing generalized 'laws' from data and subjects which do not support that pursuit.

Many of these concerns, especially as evidenced in the early years of the behavioural movement, have some validity. On the other hand, a concern with the representativeness and generalizability of results, asking questions in a systematic way, and a concern with uncovering and explaining patterns of behaviour would seem to be no drawback for the development of the field of political socialization. This would appear to be as true for case studies as it is for more traditional survey designs.

Just what well-designed studies can do to refine the theories of the field can be seen in the landmark University of Michigan socialization studies conducted by Jennings and his colleagues (Jennings and Niemi 1968). They drew a representative sample of high school seniors and one or another of the adolescents' parents who completed an interview schedule in 1965. Eight years later 81 per cent of the students and 76 per cent of the parents who were originally interviewed were re-interviewed. That study and the analyses drawn from it are a prime example of the way in which second generation research studies facilitate the specification of relationships originally framed in a general, relatively undifferentiated way. Consider, for example, the effects of the family on the transmission of political orientations. The family has long been regarded as the most important agency for transmitting political orientations (Hyman 1959:69) by many theorists in the area, but the Jennings and Niemi (1968) study was able to test not only *if*, but *when* it was the case.

Jennings and Niemi analysed parent-child correspondence in several areas including party identification, four political issues, and the sense of political cynicism. Briefly, the strongest correspondence they found was in the area of party identification ($\tau\text{-}b=0.47$), although there were some indications of a decline in such identifications. On the policy issues, Jennings and Niemi found only moderate overlap in parent-child views, and they did not find much overlap on feelings towards certain political groups in the country (for example, labour unions, negroes, big business, etc.). Finally, on the political cynicism measure, the parent sample was much more cynical than the high school senior sample.

Next, Jennings and Niemi (1968) examined the impact of several factors that might influence the transmission process. They examined the effects of parent-student sex combinations (mother-daughter, father-son, etc.), feelings of closeness among family members, power and authority relationships in the family, and the level of family politicization. Most of these factors had only modest effects on the degree of correspondence, but the level of family politicization did affect the degree of correspondence in the cases of party identification and political cynicism (Jennings and Niemi 1968:182).

Jennings and Niemi sum up their findings by observing that 'any model of socialization which rests on assumptions of pervasive currents of parent-to-child value transmissions of the types examined here, is in serious need of modification' (Jennings and Niemi 1968:183) And that is precisely the point. The Jennings-Niemi study is a good representative example of the ways in which theories can be specified for particular factors within a given context.

It is important to keep in mind that Jennings and Niemi did not examine the kinds of basic orientations and consensual attachments to the political system (support of the regime, political institutions, etc.) that others like Hess and Torney (1969) had argued were the foundation of the family's influence. Nor did

they examine the more basic political/psychological/philosophical frameworks (for example, 'pre-political ideologies', 'basic beliefs', etc.) that others have suggested are an important area of family impact. Their study assumed that these attachments were in place (Jennings and Niemi 1968:172).

Even leaving aside these matters, did the Jennings and Niemi study negate the role of the family in the political socialization process? Not really; it specified it. Does the fact that the family appears to have a more limited role in the transmission of some political orientations than previously thought call into question the existence or impact of socialization processes? No, but it does point researchers toward other factors and time frames needed to specify further what gets acquired when.

Carefully drawn studies can not only be used to specify theoretical relationships but can also help in making comparative assessments of different theoretical approaches to the same phenomenon. A longitudinal study by Moore *et al.* (1985), begun with children in kindergarten and extending four years, was designed to assess the explanatory power of social learning and cognitive development theories. They found that although social learning theory could explain knowledge acquisition (recognition of political symbols, understanding policy issues, etc.), a capacity to move from concrete to abstract thinking was also involved. Thus the findings here seem to support the idea of theoretical complementarity, at least as far as mechanisms of early childhood political learning are concerned.

Another exemplar of this possibility is the Jennings and Niemi study described above (p. 460). In addition to the parent-child interviews (panels) conducted in 1965 and 1973, they also collected data from a sample of all senior classes in 97 schools in both 1965 and 1973. This data set therefore consists of three panels (i.e. the parent's panel, the youth panel, and the 1965 and 1973 senior classes), which combine both cross-sectional and longitudinal designs. With this vast array of data, Jennings and Niemi (1981) were able to distinguish empirically between life-cycle effects (youth panel converges with parent panel, youth cohorts remain the same), life-cycle effects mixed with generational effects (youth panel converges with parent panel, youth cohorts diverge), and period effects (generations begin the same move congruently over time).

In reporting the results of the parent-child panel study described above, Jennings and Niemi also used the data specifically to address the persistence question. They found substantially more persistence in the adult panels than in the youth panels in both political and non-political domains. Yet overall they found that political orientations were far from stable for both groups, although there were differences in specific areas. This led them to favour the life-long openness model.

In sum, the hallmark of young fields and disciplines is unspecified theory, while field maturity is reflected in part by studies that can address comparative

theoretical questions. There is an important relationship between theory and data: not only can data be used to test theory, but data can function to generate theory. Incompatible, anomalous findings are an important aspect of the search for sounder theory.

Political socialization: prescriptions and possibilities

This essay began with two general questions. First, has political socialization theory demonstrated the validity of its premises? Second, what is the status of the field's development and what are its prospects for the future? Let us turn briefly to summarize each before making some observations on future directions in the field.

The question of whether the field has demonstrated the validity of its premisses rests, as noted, on a view of what these premisses are. Two general positions have been advanced on this matter. One locates the importance of the field in demonstrating linkages between political learning and systemic functioning. The other, not unrelated position locates the importance of political socialization in its impact on the individual's political development.

It seems clear that the three decades of research in the area have conclusively demonstrated the validity of the fundamental political socialization axiom, namely the 'developmental hypothesis'. That is, there is political learning over time to be explained, and there is little doubt that theories of socialization impact have helped to explain them. There are now numerous studies tracing the development of a range of political orientations, attitudes, beliefs, feelings, values, policy positions, and so forth, most of which have tried to ascertain which factors are instrumental in shaping them. That there is not full agreement about the latter should not obscure the gains in understanding derived from the former.

The attempt to link political socialization with systemic functioning has proved more difficult for reasons already discussed. This linkage makes intuitive sense, and is probably accurate in the general sense, but the size and complexity of the political systems for which it is proposed are simply too large and complex for anything but inference. Having said this, it must be noted that there is more direct evidence and correspondingly less inference involved in seeing the effects of political learning on the functioning of particular aspects of the political system. The combination of period effects (Watergate, Vietnam, etc.) and life-cycle effects on political cynicism found in the Jennings and Niemi (1981) study, and the relationships of those sets of variables to political participation, suggest one way in which theories of political socialization can be plausibly linked to one aspect of systemic functioning. This is a more modest linkage than 'system persistence' or 'system continuity', but perhaps a more realistic one.

Questions about the current state of political socialization are subject to different interpretations. While there is evidence of a decline in the amount of

published research, this does not, I think, reflect a decline of interest and intellectual vitality. On the contrary, the decline in published research may well reflect the field's success, not its failure.

There are several reasons to advance this view. First, many of the basic models and concepts of the field (for example, learning, development, etc.) have been incorporated into cognate research fields such as political behaviour (Sapiro 1990) and comparative political analysis (Arian 1989). Sapiro provides an illustration of this phenomenon in noting the dearth of political socialization and development studies which focus specifically on adults. She observes, however, that one can, 'develop a considerable bibliography of studies of partisanship, political behaviour and public opinion [which] considers "lifecycle" explanations for change or the impact of specifically adult experiences and settings on people's orientations and behaviour' (Sapiro 1990:15). In other words, a measure of a field's development may be not only the number of studies published within a field but the degree of conceptual transfer of its ideas and theories to other arenas. This is a dimension which critics of the political socialization field have failed to consider.

Second, many of the concepts and models of political socialization have also been integrated into the mainstream of the various 'foundation disciplines', particularly political science. This can be seen by reading through the *American Political Science Review* and other major disciplinary journals, but it can be seen in its most dramatic form by noting the presidential address to the American Political Science Association in 1981 by Charles Lindblom, whose research and publications have not been in the field. In that address he noted that the question of political learning and political socialization was 'as important a question for political science as can be examined' (Lindblom 1982:17). This is not a reflection on a field whose intellectual importance is in decline.

Additionally, political socialization continues to generate a steady stream of articles and books which are clearly and directly in the 'political socialization' domain. This is worth noting because it is one sign of the field's maturity that this domain has expanded over the past thirty years. Since the number of publications is only an indirect indicator of field vitality and development, it is worth commenting briefly on some of the new developments that these publications represent.

First, there has been a dramatic shift away from a focus on childhood to a concern with political socialization through the life cycle. This has been spurred by anomalous findings and also by the integration of 'newer' theories of adult development into political socialization research. This, in turn, has opened up new vistas of analysis.

One indication of this is the development of new and more refined models of impact, and its counterpart persistence. Political socialization now has a

competing set of models in each of these important areas rather than the few relatively undifferentiated ones that characterized the early stages of the field's development. That these more differentiated theories have generated their own controversies may also be read as a sign of intellectual ferment (one possible reflection of vitality) rather than a lack of erudition.

The range of adult experience is much wider than those of most children. Thus, in addition to the familiar litany of childhood agents (for example, family, school, peers, media, etc.), there are whole new contexts to explore, such as the work environment (Lafferty 1989), military service (Lovell and Stiehm 1989), careers in politics (Renshon 1989, 1990) and international political administration (Peck 1979), experiences connected with movement politics (Morris *et al.* 1989), and immigration and acculturation (Lamare 1982).

The integration of theories of adult development into political socialization research has also been partially responsible for new efforts to collect data relevant to these theories. We have already noted the Himmelweit *et al.* (1981) and Jennings and Niemi (1968, 1981) studies, but there are others too. Whalen and Flacks (1989), Braungart and Braungart (1990a, b), Bermanzohn (1990), and Fendrich and Turner (1989) have all re-interviewed selected groups of political activists to chart the course of their political lives from early radicalism through adulthood.

In examining the developments of the last several decades, a word is also in order about the developing sophistication of the research designs and data analysis. I do not mean by this more and better statistical technique, but rather research which incorporates several different data gathering modalities, and which is designed to assess the comparative value of different socialization theories. As an example of the first, the Moore *et al.* panel study (1985) used a combination of open-ended and closed questions and gathered all the data in face-to-face interviews, thus bypassing the problems associated with the administration of closed-ended survey instruments to large groups of individuals. As an example of the second point, the Jennings and Niemi (1968, 1974, 1981) studies were designed to allow comparisons of different models of persistence and change.

Finally, in assessing the development of the field one must also note the introduction and examination of other models of psychological development and functioning. Social developmental models associated with Piaget, Kohlberg and others have received more attention over the past decade, and several recent books have directly addressed the contribution of these theories to political socialization (Rosenberg 1985; Rosenberg *et al.* 1988).

A somewhat newer development on the theoretical horizon is the application of other cognitive theories, most particularly those associated with schema analysis (Torney-Purta 1990) to political socialization theory. Schema analysis is addressed as much to the issue of how political understanding gets organized in

individuals' minds as it is to the particular content involved (although the latter is important also). Schemata may be thought of as mental filing systems which are organized in both socially conventional and idiosyncratic ways.

Torney-Purta (1990:113) notes that a major question at this point is how useful schemata will prove in helping to understand important aspects of political life. The structure of schemata may tell us something about how individuals organize their political world, and by what rules political experiences through the life cycle are assigned to different intra-psychic categories. This, in turn, may help to explain variations in response to similar political experiences. These would seem to be useful additions to knowledge about the political socialization process. Moreover, if schema theory does prove useful, questions of acquisition and development over the life cycle will come to the fore.

The development and application of new models of individual functioning in political socialization theory, coupled with the refinement of the more 'traditional' models of the past, underscore an important point about the relationship of models to the phenomenon that the field of political socialization studies. One can argue that the increase in the number of new and old competing models in the field reflects either a state of robust intellectual vigour or a failure to fully test and discard those theories which do not pull their own explanatory weight.

Some recent criticisms of the field have appeared to adopt the second view. Cook (1985) argues that the decline (as he sees it) of political socialization is directly related to the 'misunderstood psychological theories'. While his critique of the 'invariant persistence' model is well taken, his suggestion that the field reorient itself on the basis of Vygotsky's model of cognitive development is not likely to prove of decisive help. Rosenberg's call to reorient the field by fully developing a psychological approach, which he defines as a person's subjective understanding of the political world, runs the risk of equating and confounding socialization with perception (Rosenberg 1985:725).

The problem with these calls for reorientation is not that political socialization would fail to benefit from further model development. Rather the problem is that given the complexity and diversity of the processes the field covers, no one model is likely to be decisive. Do children learn according to principles of social learning theory? Yes. Do children go through, in some form, the developmental stages that Piaget and others described? Yes. Is affectively charged political experience important in shaping political orientations both in childhood and adulthood? Yes. However, if the answers to all these, and similar questions that could be raised, is affirmative, then the road to further progress in the field will not lie in finding a single master theory of the process.

One of political socialization's needs is to develop *integrative* models. To give one example, individual-level theories of cognitive functions are presented as if

affect and cognition are unrelated in actual practice. Given that feelings about leaders, for example, have come to be the single best predictors of voting choices, this would appear to be a serious omission indeed. So too, integration must also be maintained between sociologically oriented and psychologically oriented theories. Politics does not take place solely in the psyche, nor do many external political 'realities' go uninterpreted.

The question of political socialization's larger impact (for example, beyond individuals) remains an open and important question. Strategies of aggregated inference to make the case at the societal level have not proved productive. Perhaps an alternative may be found in the attempt to trace such aggregated impacts at a more local level, or in more clearly circumscribed institutional contexts.

Finally, a word about new areas of research for the field. We have already noted that adult development theories have opened up new areas for analysis, and these need not be repeated. However, the concern with *how* people think politically, as well as what they think, represents a promising avenue for development.

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POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

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Political institutions, from the most primitive to the most complex, cannot exist without communication, which is essential to the symbolic representation of authority and to competition for, and exercise of, power. The conduct of modern, democratic politics also depends on participation by citizens, for which extensive means of public communication are indispensable. Although all these fundamental matters cannot be fully dealt with here, we should be aware of the broad extent of the territory indicated by the term 'political communication'. There is also a historical dimension to the topic and particular importance attaches to the rise of the newspaper press.

This essay provides a brief overview of the most important issues relating to political communication, including: the centrality of the print media to the emergence of democratic politics; the relation of mass media to mass politics and propaganda; the influence of mass media on election campaigns and on the formation of public opinion; political communication as a means of 'tolerant repression'; and contemporary media policy issues (in effect, the politics of public communication). Finally, it will consider future trends both in research in this field and in political communication itself.

HISTORY

The newspaper was the chief instrument of political communication, as we now use the term, from the eighteenth until the mid-twentieth century. During this period, it served (however variably) as: a reporter of political events and the proceedings of political assemblies; a platform for the expression of political opinion; an instrument for party political organization and mobilization and for forging ideology; a weapon in inter-party conflict; a critic of and 'watchdog' on governmental actions; and an instrument of government for information and influence. These remain the essential political functions of the mass media to the present day.

The close interconnection between politics and the press largely accounts for the privileged position granted to the newspaper press in many constitutions and for the access often guaranteed to political parties and government in most public broadcasting systems. Representative of the protection given to the press (largely identifying freedom to publish with freedom of speech and assembly) are the First Amendment to the US Constitution which states that 'Congress shall make no law...abridging the freedom of the Press', or the (still valid) Article of the 1848 Dutch Constitution which states that 'no prior permission is required for publishing thoughts or views by way of the press, aside from everyone's responsibility before the law'.

The print media played a critical role during the Age of Enlightenment and in the subsequent popular revolutions in America (1776), France (1789), Central Europe (1848) and Russia (1917) in disseminating new ideas and providing organized political groups with the tools for gaining and holding onto power. Because of this historical legacy, political communication has generally been associated with the expression and diffusion of ideas (thus, ideologies) and also with conflicts: between rival contenders for office; between parties and ideologies; between government and opposition and government and people.

THE RISE OF MODERN COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA

While political communication is as old as politics, it was the organized use of the modern mass media for political ends, especially in the conduct of election campaigns, which first led to the development of systematic inquiry into political communication and has given the topic its main contemporary identification. However, political communication is more than just political campaigning. In the terms used by Seymour-Ure (1974), it has a *horizontal* as well as a *vertical* dimension. The former refers to communication between equals, whether these are members of the same political elite, or citizens who interact and assemble together. Vertical communication takes place between government (or parties) and people (in principle in either direction). The early emphasis on campaigns focused attention on the 'top-down' flow on the vertical dimension (from government or party to citizens and followers). This, however, led to the neglect of communication within elites and of interpersonal, informal communication. We should also take note of the flow of communication 'upwards', to the political 'top', in the form of voting 'feedback', opinion poll results, or other forms of intelligence gathering by politicians and governments.

Political communication thus refers to all processes of information (including facts, opinions, beliefs, etc.) transmission, exchange and search engaged in by participants in the course of institutionalized political activities. We can most usefully confine our attention to those activities which belong to the 'public

sphere' of political life, a reference both to the content of open political debate and the 'arenas' where such debates occur. Such arenas comprise institutionally guaranteed social space, as much as locations set aside for political debate.

In practice, political communication covers the following:

- 1 activities directed towards the formation, mobilization and deployment of parties and similar political movements;
- 2 all forms of organized campaign designed to gain political support for a party, cause, policy or government, by influencing opinion and behaviour (and the course of elections);
- 3 many processes involving the expression, measurement, dissemination and also 'management' of public opinion (this includes informal, interpersonal discussion);
- 4 the activities of established mass media in reporting or commenting on political events;
- 5 processes of public information and debate related to political policies;
- 6 informal political socialization and the formation and maintenance of political consciousness.

MASS MEDIA AND MASS POLITICS

The study of political communication during the twentieth century, beyond the story of the rise of the political newspaper press, has been shaped by a trend towards 'mass politics', based on universal suffrage within large-scale bureaucratically organized societies (Mills 1955). This trend placed a premium on the capacity of political leaders to manage the direction of individual choice of large numbers of citizens, with whom ties are inevitably remote or superficial. Against this background, the central issues have concerned: the role and influence of a more commercialized mass press, especially in affecting the balance of power between an established 'bourgeois' government and any socialist or radical challenge; the question of 'propaganda'—the organized and massive use of all forms of modern communication by power holders to gain popular support; and the development of the scientifically, or professionally, planned election campaign using new means and techniques of communication and opinion measurement.

MASS MEDIA AND POLITICAL PARTIES

The first of these issues called for particular attention to changes in the relationships between press and political parties and to questions of ownership and monopoly of the means of communication. As Seymour-Ure (1974) points out, there are three main bases for a (political) relationship between a newspaper and a party:

- 1 organizational correspondence—the paper belongs to the party, and is designed to serve the ends of the party;
- 2 support for the goals of a party—a newspaper can decide to choose editorially to support a party and consistently advocate its policies; and
- 3 correspondence between readership and support for a given party—for reasons other than those named, a newspaper may happen to draw its readers from a class or social sector which predominately leans in a particular political direction, without a conscious political choice being made.

In the case of the organizational link, each of the other conditions is also likely to be met, but the three variables provide a key to examining the relationship of press to party from total symbiosis to complete independence.

The first condition (a newspaper actively supports the goals of a party) was a common feature of early newspapers in the United States and it was equally common in continental Europe, at least until the Second World War. It has greatly declined as a result of general trends towards: less ideological and more pragmatic forms of politics; more commercialization of the press (favouring neutrality or political balance in the interests of extending market coverage); the decline in competition and choice (monopoly papers tend to be less openly party-aligned); and increased professionalization of journalism, which has also favoured the objective and informative over the advocacy or propagandist role of the press. Press partisanship has also been under pressure from the rise of the more balanced, objective journalism practised (often as a matter of public policy) in broadcasting.

The question of concentration of ownership remains an issue, although for somewhat altered reasons. The original fear was that a large capitalist press concern (or several such) would throw its weight explicitly behind a political party of the right and use its dominance of circulation to influence opinion directly. Because of the trends affecting the press and because of changes in the modern corporation towards a diversified concern, often with multinational interests, it is now less common to find newspaper proprietors engaging actively in party politics. The rise of alternative channels of communication offered by radio and television has also diminished the fear of capitalist press monopoly. The present concern is more about general loss of diversity and about the 'depoliticization' and 'commercialization' of the press and broadcasting, leading to a reduction in the informative as well as propagandist potential of the press and the impoverishment of democratic life. Recent liberalization of broadcasting increases the chance of 'cross-media' ownership by large conglomerates. The trends described have also been said to favour a very consensual, 'mainstream' version of politics, to the detriment of marginal or radical voices and of forces for conflict and change.

PROPAGANDA

The modern study of political communication virtually began with the study of propaganda, especially as a response to the uses made of new means of communications (press and film) during and after the First World War to promote patriotism and other ideologies amongst national mass publics. The early equation of political communication with propaganda was reinforced by the example of the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, both of which used their monopoly of control of mass media (now including radio) for their own different projects of social transformation.

Not surprisingly, the term 'propaganda' acquired a negative connotation. It was used to indicate a form of persuasive communication with the following features: the communication is for the purposes of the sender, rather than for the receiver, or for mutual benefit; it involves a high degree of control and management by the source; the purpose and sometimes the identity of the source is often concealed. In general, propaganda is strongly 'manipulative', one-directional and coercive (Jowett and O'Donnell 1987). In a modified and somewhat less pejorative meaning, the term propaganda still refers to direct communications from political parties by way of mass media designed to persuade or mobilize support.

Confidence in the irresistible power of mass media persuasion suffered at the hands of early empirical communication research in the 1940s and 1950s, which showed that individuals were able to resist persuasive messages the more these conflicted with existing opinion and the more such opinion was anchored in strong personal convictions or by the norms of the social group or reference group to which a person belonged. The concept of a 'two-step flow' of communication was proposed to refer to a typical process by which political messages often need to pass the test of a small minority of 'influentials' or 'opinion leaders', whose endorsement would help in achieving planned effects (Lazarsfeld *et al.* 1944).

ELECTION CAMPAIGN RESEARCH

The systematic study of election communication was itself made possible by advances in the techniques for measuring attitudes and opinion and methods of multivariate statistical analysis. However, such methods favoured inquiry into short-term effects on individuals and led to a neglect of other kinds of effect—on institutions and on long-term political change.

Despite the cautionary findings of empirical research on campaign effectiveness (it was very difficult to prove any direct effects of significance), political communication came, in the post-war period and especially after the rise of television, to be largely identified in many countries with the conduct of

intensive and expensive multi-media campaigns by parties and candidates in the run-up to elections. These campaigns were often modelled on commercial advertising and increasingly adopted the thinking and the methods appropriate to marketing products, seeking to establish and then 'sell' the 'images' of parties and leaders. Neither objections in principle to these strategies nor uncertainty about their efficacy were able to prevent this trend.

Several factors worked together to encourage increased reliance on mass media campaigns. One was the rise of television, which not only offered a convenient and efficient way of instantly reaching large numbers, but also soon became the only effective way, as party organizations and party-related press systems declined and as access to broadcasting became an institutionalized right in many political systems. Television also enjoyed an enormous reputation as a manipulative device, far in excess of any evidence, though its popularity was undeniable. Belief in the power of television had self-fulfilling consequences, since parties and politicians could not afford *not* to do their best by way of television, whatever its real efficacy. These consequences went beyond a direct use of the medium to address the public, leading to the detailed planning of campaign news and political events so as to maximize the chance of gaining attention and minimize unfavourable publicity. The term 'pseudo-event' was coined to refer to this artificial 'manufacture' of news.

Research into political communication campaigns has reminded us of the multiple uses and functions of the campaign for citizens as well as for politicians and parties. The media, also, have a strong self-interest in politics, since it is a major source of news events and the typical election campaign yields large amounts of news which helps to attract viewers, sell newspapers, and earn advertising revenue. For citizens, election campaigns offer several possible benefits: information with which to 'keep up' with events; a basis for making choices; reinforcement of beliefs; and an arcane form of spectator sport (Blumler and McQuail 1968). Politicians can choose between the roles of party standard-bearer, competitor for votes, informant and public performer.

POLITICAL EFFECTS OF TELEVISION

The rise of television as the most favoured medium of political communication (although it often follows the lead of the newspaper press and is much less politically free), in conjunction with other social changes, has had a number of wider, unintended results (although the causal connections can never be fully established). It has probably contributed to a greater centralization of politics, a decline in mass grassroots organization, a decrease in sharp partisan and ideological divisions (because television favours the political 'middle ground'), an increase in the use and influence of opinion polling to guide campaign planning

and to monitor its success, and an increase in voter volatility as attachments are weaker and voting more swayed by current concerns and single issues.

It also seems to be the case that the relative power of those who control the 'gates' of the media in general has increased *vis-à-vis* that of politicians, as the centrality of mass media to political communication has increased. In the short term, politicians need access to the media more than the media need politicians, and the political role of media decision makers has increased and become more sensitive. Even governments and office holders are dependent on media attention, although their own power to control events and to claim access gives them a countervailing advantage.

One of the early expectations from television—that it would give a differential advantage to charismatic leaders or open the way to manipulation by way of personality and image making—has received little support from research or experience. Having a reputation as an attractive and effective television performer has gained in significance as a criterion for political advancement, but it has not replaced other, more crucial political qualities. There is no evidence of an increase in personal demagoguery or emotional appeals. Nor is there much support for the view that television can invent and 'sell' qualities for which there is no basis in the reality of candidate or party. There is, all the same, a widespread belief that an effect of television has been in the direction of 'presidential style' politics. It may also be significant that national (and international) politics is still thought of in terms of individual personalities in an era of increased systematization and bureaucratization.

'MEDIA LOGIC' VERSUS 'PARTY LOGIC'

A corollary of the steadily increasing role of mass media in political affairs is the relatively greater weight attached to what has been referred to as 'media logic' (Altheide 1985), by contrast with 'political logic'. The term refers, most broadly, to the adoption of strategies of political action by contenders for office, which are influenced by considerations of getting favourable media attention, especially in news or other 'objective' formats. In more detail, it refers to paying close attention to the form, rather than substance, to presentation and packaging, rather than issues and policies. 'Media logic' may be followed by politicians or by the media themselves. It has been noted, for instance, that television coverage of modern election campaigns is inclined differentially to attend to personalities and human interest features, to the 'horse race' aspects of elections rather than the democratic choices at stake (Graber 1980).

Television, by comparison with older forms, has also been associated with a decline in the quality of political reasoning, with 'spot' advertising taking over from the argued case or the rhetorical appeal. There appears to be no way to

consciously 'repoliticize' elections, except when and where history takes a hand and forces issues to the forefront. On the other hand, television itself has developed new formats which provide much solid political information, often in new forms, in addition to the efforts of party persuaders and their interventions in news. These forms include debates between party leaders, indepth reporting and, most significant perhaps, the extension of television coverage to the continuing proceedings in parliaments and similar places otherwise largely closed to public view. It would be hard to sustain the view that television has in itself been a cause of a 'decline of politics'.

The salience of the mass media as the main gate and channel for reaching the mass public has led to the increasing use of strategies for gaining media attention by way of public demonstrations or dramatic actions, which the media tend to report because of their dramatic or intrinsic interest. The type of political act, whose primary objective is often to gain publicity, also extends to some acts of violence and terrorism—hijacking, hostage-taking and bombings, which often have communicative as well as military objectives.

POLITICAL INFORMATION VERSUS POLITICAL PERSUASION

Campaigns typically have multiple (and sometimes inconsistent) objectives: to inform about policy and proposal; to establish and modify party and leader 'images'; to identify a party with certain issues; to attract converts and waverers; to mobilize supporters. Despite the emphasis on persuasion and image making, the clearest evidence from research has been of informational learning. Two main features of campaign learning have been singled out by researchers. One of these has become known under the heading of 'agenda-setting'. This refers to the process whereby the volume of attention given to an issue in mass media (whether or not by design) tends to shape the public perception of what are the most salient issues of the moment. This perception, in turn, can be influential in the formation of opinion and of party or candidate preference (party stands on salient issues can influence the direction of voting). The logic is plausible, and it can be demonstrated that trends in attention to issues do follow the relative weight of media attention. However, because of the complexity of real-life politics and the limitations of research methods, the decisive source of the pattern of issue salience which emerges in a given case has never been clearly established. Is it the voting public (to whose concerns appeals are usually oriented)? Or the media (who also want to anticipate public concerns)? Or the politicians (who follow opinion as much as they lead it)?

A second concept that relates to political learning is that of the 'knowledge gap'. This refers to structured inequalities in knowledge (not only about politics) in a whole population, as a result of a differential growth in knowledge on the

part of those who are rich in information resources (education, motivation, the means of being generally informed). The early development of democratic politics was accompanied by a necessary diffusion of basic political knowledge throughout a citizen body, newly enfranchised, aided by the mass newspaper press. The possibility has been canvassed that this process of levelling up (closing of the knowledge gap) has been halted or reversed as a result of several forces, but especially: the relative decline of the informational and political newspaper press in the face of the ever more popular and entertainment-oriented television medium and of the popular entertainment press; the increasing complexity of political information; and the decline in political participation (for instance low voting rates in US presidential elections) and in partisanship generally (for whatever reasons), leading to a detachment from the substance of politics. A minority of the population remains intensely involved and well informed, while a growing minority ceases to participate or to be easily reachable by mass political communication. In the light of such research evidence, there has been an increased interest in how well television news (now a principal source of political information) is understood and recalled by the mass audience (Robinson and Levy 1986). However, circumstances are continually changing, making assessment on such matters uncertain, particularly as television news becomes more oriented to entertainment, in response to sharper competition for the mass audience. Those developments in the range of formats available for political communication, noted above (pp. 473–7), are also relevant for assessment.

POLITICAL COMMUNICATION AS AN INTERACTIVE PROCESS

Research into the persuasive potential of political campaigns, although often inconclusive, has also established a number of generalizations about the probabilities and the conditions for the achievement of intended effects. Opinion and information changes are more likely to occur on 'distant' and newly emerging issues than on matters on which attitudes have already been informed. Monopoly control of the source or simply consonance and repetition of messages may also achieve results in a predictable direction. It is easier to reinforce existing support than to recruit new supporters by conversion. The status, attractiveness and credibility of the communicator do matter. Effects are easier to achieve in relation to separate facts and opinions than on deeper attitudes, outlooks, or world view. In general much more depends on the receivers—their dispositions, motivation, prior attitudes and knowledge—than on the message itself or the status of the source. As noted above, opinions are anchored in immediate social relationships, which to some degree 'protect' individuals from media influence.