Political Socialization & Political Culture

GVPT 100
SEPTEMBER 17, 2007
OUTLINE

1. Basic Political Concepts:
   i. Authority
   ii. Legitimacy
2. Political Culture
3. Political Socialization
Authority is power based on a general agreement that a person or group has the right to issue certain sorts of commands, and that those commands should be obeyed.

One approach to authority focuses on the question of who has a right to rule, and on what this right rests.

Social contract theorists such as Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau bases the moral foundation of authority on the consent of the governed.
Social Contract Theorists

John Locke, English philosopher (1632-1704)

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, French philosopher (1712-1778)
How Authority Differs From Power

- If power is the ability of some individual, group, or institution to control, coerce, or regulate others, authority is the recognition of the right of that individual, group, or institution to exercise power.

- There is an element of trust, faith, and recognition on the part of those following authority that the person exercising it possesses some quality (for example, wisdom, expertise, or the fact that the person was elected by the people) that ought to be deferred to. If this is the case, then authority, rather than simple power, exists and must be followed, adhered to, and, within limits, obeyed.
Max Weber’s three kinds of authority

Max Weber distinguished between three ideal types of authority, based upon the different grounds on which obedience can be established:

- **Traditional authority** is rooted in history and tradition;
- **Charismatic authority** stems from the personality of the leader;
- **Legal rational authority** is grounded in a set of impersonal rules and powers associated with an office rather than the office holder.
Weber’s Conception of Authority

- Weber’s approach to authority focuses more on the question of whether those who are ruled accept authority as legitimate regardless of its source. Authority, in this sense, is “legitimate power.”
- If those affected think that power is exercised legitimately, then any of these three types of authority is legitimate, regardless of its moral justification that we find in the social contract tradition.
- Weber also suggested that as societies modernize, authority transforms from traditional, to charismatic, to legal-rational.
It is crucial to a government that large numbers of its people should believe that it has authority and that it properly *should* have that authority. We call the existence of this sort of feeling, to the extent that it does exist, the *legitimacy* of the government.

Legitimacy, like authority itself, is a matter of degree. Not everyone in a state will necessarily always agree that its government is legitimate or that a given type of governmental act is legitimate.
SOURCES OF LEGITIMACY

1. Legitimacy by results (e.g., economic prosperity, stability, and security)
2. Legitimacy by habit
3. Legitimacy by historical, religious, or ethnic identity (e.g., emotional ties)
4. Legitimacy by procedures (e.g., democratic elections)
Political culture refers to the distinguishing beliefs, values, attitudes, habits, and behavior patterns that characterize a political community.

Political culture is made up of cognitive, affective and evaluative orientations towards the political system.
Political Culture ≠ Public Opinion

- Political Culture is broader than public opinion. It functions as a frame which constrains acceptable political action and discourse. It provides assumptions that guide public life. It is more enduring, stable and cross-generational.

- The essence of political culture is not agreement on issues, but common perception of the rights and obligations of citizenship and of the rules for participating in the political process.
Comparing Political Cultures

- Students of politics can observe important distinctions between what values and beliefs are central to a given society.
- In the United States, for instance, there is a great emphasis placed on individual freedom. Other cultures may be more concerned with collective equality or less enamored with the very idea of personal freedom.
In their book *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (1963), the American political scientists Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba proposed three basic models of political culture based on their cross-national survey research on five democratic countries: Italy, Germany, Mexico, US, and UK.
The Civic Culture Cont’ed

- Political culture determined by three main factors:
  - **Awareness** of government
  - **Expectations** of government
  - Political **participation**

- Three types of political culture:
  - **Parochial** cultures (low awareness, expectations, and participation) Example: Mexico
  - **Subject** (higher levels of awareness and expectation but low participation) Examples: Italy, Germany
  - **Participant** (high levels of all three) Examples: USA, UK
Recall David Easton’s “Political System” Model
Parochial culture

- In this model citizens have no cognitive orientations toward the political system.
- Societies characterized by this type of political culture do not expect anything positive of government, nor do they expect to participate in politics because it is seen as the elite domain.
- Furthermore, the government is seen as the enforcer of its own rules and consequently, the realm of politics is seen as one to be avoided whenever possible.
Subject Culture

- In this model citizens have cognitive orientations toward only the output aspects of the system.
- This tends to be manifested in a citizenry that expects positive action from government, but that does not tend to be politically active themselves.
- They, too, see politics as an elite domain only to be engaged in by those with power and influence.
Participatory Culture

- In this model citizens have cognitive orientations toward both the input and output aspects of the system.
- Societies which possess this type of political culture tend to have citizens with high expectations of government and of personally participating in politics, if at no other time than voting in an election.
- This type of culture is central to the principles of any democratic society.
What does political culture do?

- Through the process of political socialization, the central values of the political culture are transmitted from one generation to another.
POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION

- Why do people hold the political beliefs that they do?
- The values and assumptions people hold about politics are acquired in a process called political socialization, which simply means the learning of political values and factual assumptions about politics.
- Through political socialization people understand, accept, and usually approve and support the existing political system.
Agents of Political Socialization

- Socialization happens both directly and indirectly.
- The persons by which and the setting in which the process of political socialization is accomplished are called the agents of political socialization.
Agents of Political Socialization Cont’ed

- The **family** is responsible for, among other things, determining one’s attitudes toward religion and establishing career goals.
- The **school** is the agency responsible for socializing groups of young people in particular skills and values in society. In all states, there is some degree of guided socialization through the schools. The schools attempt to mold the citizenry according to the ideals of the state.
Agents of Political Socialization Cont’ed

- **Peer groups** refer either to a group of people who are friends or to people of similar age and characteristics (e.g., students in a college class). Peer groups are extremely influential in developing adolescents' tastes and their view of the world but they vary considerably in their political impact.

- **Mass Media** include newspapers, magazines, radio, and films, CDs, internet, etc. We are dependent on the media for *what* we know and *how* we relate to the world of politics because of the media-politics connection. We read or watch political debates followed by instant analysis and commentary by “experts.”
Agents of Political Socialization Cont’ed

- **Other Agents**: State, Religion, Political Events, Art
- **Socio-Demographic Influences**: Geographical Region, Race, Social class, Gender, and Age.
- In the U.S., Jews and Catholics tend to identify more with the Democratic party and Protestants tend to vote more Republican.
- Women are more reluctant than men to support war, capital punishment and are more in favor of gun control laws. Women also are more likely to support social welfare programs that help families, the working poor and the economically disadvantaged.
Agents of Political Socialization Cont’ed

- Agents of socialization may be categorized into groups by their focus and the intensity of their influence.
  - **Primary groups** are the agents of socialization with which an individual has regular face-to-face interactions (e.g., family, friends, and work associates).
  - **Secondary groups** tend to be more large-scale and diffuse (e.g., religious, civic, and professional associations).
Agents of socialization influence individuals differently at different stages in an individual’s life.

- **Life-cycle effects** stand for changes in the beliefs and behavior which occur at particular stages in a person’s life. When a person has children, for instance, their opinions may change on certain political matters.

- **Period Effects** stand for the impact on people of all ages caused by major historical events such as the Great Depression or the September 11.

- **Cohort Effects** stand for the influence of a historical event on one specific group of individuals such as the impact a specific war would have on draft-age men of that time period.
The Influence of the Family

- Families exert the first and most important influence on the formation of individual values. The values which are transmitted in the early years of learning are generally kept throughout life.
- Family is also one of the central influences in preparing individuals for their role in society. The process of socialization by the family begins in infancy. Children begin to develop attitudes towards authority based on how the parents treat them from birth. In a sense, children first become citizens of the family.
Studies have shown that families have a homogeneous political outlook. Parents generally share similar political beliefs. According to one study, 83% of husbands and wives share the same political party affiliation.

In families with homogeneous political outlook, children receive consistent political messages. When both parents share a party affiliation, children will most likely hold that same party affiliation. When both parents are independents, their children overwhelmingly identify themselves as independents.
America’s Oddest Couple

James Carville, Democratic strategist

Mary Matalin, Republican strategist
The Carville Family
**Relation between Party Identification of Parents and Offspring among Parents with a Partisan-Independent Party Identification Mix**

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<th>Parental Party Identification Mix</th>
<th>Student Party Identification</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother Democrat</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100%  (20)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Father Independent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent Democrat</td>
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<td>Independent Democrat</td>
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<td>Republican</td>
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<td>Independent</td>
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## Relation between Party Identification of Bi-Polar Parents and Their Offspring

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<tr>
<th>Parental Partisan Identification Mix</th>
<th>Student Party Identification</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother Democrat, Father Republican</td>
<td>Democrat: 44%</td>
<td>37</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independent: 21</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Republican: 35</td>
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<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican, Democrat</td>
<td>Democrat: 29%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independent: 38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Republican: 33</td>
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<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
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The Influence of the Mass Media

- A person’s knowledge of politics cannot simply come from their own personal experience or through the lessons learned from others directly. Much of the political knowledge people have comes from the mass media.
- The mass media influences individuals by what they report and what they do not report.
Even with the selection process made by the media, most individuals do not spend much time listening or watching the news. Citizens spend an average of fifteen minutes on news through the various forms of media.

Like other agents of political socialization, the media reinforces much of the political culture by reporting on election results and economic news. This reporting reinforces these institutions within society. The media does not frequently discuss alternatives to the way society is fundamentally structured.
Functions of the News Media

- Agenda setting/identifying public problems
  - Deciding what and who are newsworthy. Allocating TV time/newspaper space accordingly
- Makes topics public, creates issues, and elevates personalities from obscurity to celebrity.
- Real power of mass media is to decide what shall be decided. Defining issues, identifying alternative policies, focusing on political, economic, or social “crises.” Conditions not defined as problems never become policy issues.
Media bias

- Media has "bad news" bias, especially on television
  - Bad news stories outnumber good news stories at least 3 to 1
  - Negative news attracts viewers, which in turn leads to more sponsors & more money
- Sensationalism
  - Shows violence, conflict, scandal, corruption, sex, scares of various sorts and personal lives of celebrities and politicians
  - Emotional impact of news helps sell it
- Distorts real news
  - More complex topics are simplified, dramatized or ignored
Six corporations control the major U.S. media outlets:

1. Time Warner (AOL, CNN, Warner Bros., Time, etc.)
2. Disney (ABC, Disney Channel, ESPN, etc.)
3. Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation (FOX, HarperCollins, New York Post, etc.)
4. Bertelsmann (Random House, Sony BMG Music Entertainment, etc.)
5. Viacom (CBS, MTV, Paramount Pictures, etc.)
6. General Electric (NBC, MSNBC, Telemundo, Universal Pictures, etc.).
Nineteen Eighty-Four (or 1984) is an English dystopian novel by George Orwell, published in 1949. The phrase "Big Brother is watching you" refers to invasive surveillance associated with the mass media and/or the state.
The Left-Liberal View of the Corporate Media

From ORWELL ROLLS IN HIS GRAVE
A political documentary directed by Robert Kane Pappas
Regulation of the Media

- The U.S. government exercises the least control of the media in any industrialized nation
- Media regulation does exist in the U.S. despite the 1st Amendment
  - The Federal Communication Commission (FCC) was created in 1934 to regulate broadcast media
The Content Regulations of FCC

- **Equal Time Rule:** This required station owners who sold political advertisement to one candidate to make the same amount of paid time available to another candidate.

- **Right-of-reply Rule:** If a person is attacked on a broadcast (other than in regular news programming), that person has the right to reply over that same station.

- **Fairness Doctrine:** No longer in effect since 1987. It did require stations to represent controversial public issues and allow contrasting viewpoints.
Does media affect public opinion or behavior?

- Difficult to prove that media cause changes in opinions or behavior. There may be an overall effect of the media as opposed to individual effects.
- Media can’t tell us what to think specifically, but can tell us what to think about and provide us a range of possible ways to think about it.
Conclusion: Why Political Education Matters

- “The fatherland cannot endure without freedom, nor freedom without virtue, nor virtue without citizens; you will have everything if you form citizens; if you do not, you will have nothing but nasty slaves, beginning with the chiefs of the state. Now to form citizens is not the work of a single day; and to have them be citizens when they are grown, they have to be taught when they are children.”

Rousseau