



A review of research on mass media and political socialization

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Abstract

Because of its entertainment and knowledge, mass media makes the political information it propagates easy to be accepted by people, and plays a pivotal role in spreading political information, influencing election results and national management. Therefore, mass media has become the most important institution of political socialization with its unparalleled social penetrating power. The main factors that affect the function of mass media are information source, communication form and the restriction of the audience itself.

Keywords: mass media, political socialization, role

Introduction

Since the 1950s, "political socialization" has been widely used as soon as it was put forward, and has become an important field of modern political research. Political socialization can be divided into broad sense and narrow sense. In the narrow sense, political socialization is the purpose-oriented education of political information, value and practice of the regular and guiding institutions. The concept of generalized covering all of the political study, formal and informal, purposeful and unplanned, at all stages of life cycle, including not only specifically political study, but also affect the political behavior in the name of the political learning, such as related to the political attitude of learning society, the cultivation of personality traits associated with politics. This paper only refers to the meaning of political socialization in a narrow sense. "Institutions responsible for guidance" mainly include families, schools, social organizations, mass media, etc. With the declining political education function of traditional political socialization institutions such as family, school and social organization, mass media has become the most important institution of political socialization by virtue of its incomparable social penetrating power. Mass media include print media (newspapers, magazines), television, radio, the Internet, and so on. At present, domestic scholars have more researches on mass media, but less researches on the role of mass media in political socialization. However, western scholars have done a lot of researches on the relationship between mass media and political socialization, and have formed a lot of consensus. In view of this, this paper attempts to analyze the research on mass media and political socialization by western scholars, in order to attract the attention of domestic academic circles and provide useful mirror to broaden the scope of political socialization research.

The Role of Mass Media in Political Socialization

With the development of The Times, the role of mass media in political socialization is more and more important. As Chafee etc. argued, "It is extremely short-sighted not to pay attention to media utilization in the study of political socialization." This point has become the consensus of many scholars. First of all, mass media is an important source of political information dissemination in modern countries. This is most evident in comparison with other major social institutions such as family and school. The role of family and school in political socialization is staged. For example, when a child is born, the role of the family is the greatest. However, with the growth of children's age, especially after children enter school, the role of the school in political socialization is gradually increasing, and the role of the family is gradually weakened. The role of schools is only that citizens play a significant role during their schooling, but that role diminishes after the students leave school. And the role of mass media starts from birth. The influence of mass media is present in preschool, during and after school. Western scholars have come to the same conclusion when studying different age groups such as children, teenagers and adults. In a pilot study by Lambert and Klinenberg, French Canadian, British Canadian, British, proportional, and Dutch children were asked to say that other people were "the same" and "different" from them. As a result, the British, French and Americans responded most like them, while Chinese and black people responded least like them. The sources of this information are mainly people (parents, relatives, friends and familiar people) and the media, schools, books and travel are secondary. However, with the increase of age, the role of people decreases, the media and schools increase, while the role of reading is not changed at all ages. In their study, they found that the mass media and people play an equal role in childhood, but as we age, the role of the media outweighs the role of people and keeps pace with the role of

schools. So what is the role of schools and the mass media? Holland's research provides an answer. He investigated the sources from which teenagers got information about the Vietnam War, and found that the primary source of teenagers' information about the war was mass media, among which TV was the most important, and newspapers and magazines were the second most important. Other sources of information that influence teenagers are school, parents and friends, in that order. That is, the mass media has a dominant position in the youth's political learning, even more than the primary group, so he calls the media "the new parents." This function of the media continues well into adulthood. Harrop's evidence shows that voters are more influenced by the media than ever before, that they see the media as an important source of political information, and that media coverage of politics has reached saturation point. At the same time, he has noticed that voters are becoming less partisan, with a growing number of floating voters who are more swayed by the information provided by the media.

Second, mass media influence election results. Since mass media have become an important source of political information for voters, mass media play an important role in voters' decision making. Even the emergence of mass media led to the manipulation and control of public consciousness. Fromm believed that television was being used by professional politicians to portray politicians in the same way television advertisements were used to promote the virtues of soap. The political machine in a democracy functions in a way that is not intrinsically different from the way a commodity market works: "Professional politicians sell their wares to the public. The methods used by these professional politicians increasingly resemble hard-sell advertisements." So what looks like a free election is actually an election that manipulates the will of the people. "Real decisions are often made by political parties rather than by parliamentarians representing the interests and aspirations of each constituency. And even within political parties, decisions are made by a few little-known and influential key players. The reality is that, although citizens trust him to direct the decisions of the state, his role is not much greater than in the case of ordinary shareholders involved in controlling 'his' company." It can be said that who master the mass media, in the election process has mastered the initiative.

Finally, the mass media are becoming more and more important to the management of the country. The mass media not only play a role in the struggle for power, but also play a role in the management of the country. Hyman discusses the role of mass media in countries in transition. He believes that mass media are more appropriate as socializers in a society in transition. Other social institutions, such as family, school, and friends, may preach political orientations that are inconsistent and often contrary to the direction of modernization. As a socialized institution, mass media is effective and can quickly spread information to the whole population in need of modernization. Moreover, its standardization can make citizens' behavior pattern consistent across the country. In addition to affirming the role of mass media in countries in transition, Dawson and Prewitt emphasized the role of mass media in modern countries. They

argue that the modern nation-state is characterized by a general interest in politics, centralized administration, and widespread participation, which would not have been possible without the development of mass communication technologies. No modern regime can survive without the widespread, rapid, and consistent dissemination of information.

The Reasons Why Mass Media Play an Important Role in Political Society

So why does the mass media play an important role in political socialization? Mass media is a complex, with both entertaining and informative content, and the diversity of content attracts groups with different interests. Some of the entertainment programs are political in nature, or some of the political content is expressed in the form of entertainment. In order to attract the attention of the audience, some programs with political content will also add entertainment elements. For example, in some cartoons used for election campaigns, candidates talk about their family life, love stories and health in interviews, so as to attract the attention of voters and win the favor of voters. Baum calls entertainment oriented news "soft news" and public affairs oriented news "hard news". Soft news emphasizes more personal and familiar parts, and a series of story features. It lacks statements of public policy. Instead, it emphasizes emotional statements, people's interests as the main theme, and dramatic themes, such as crime and disaster, scandals, and celebrity stories. In short, story features are the most useful feature that distinguishes traditional news from soft news. How does soft news deliver political messages? Baum thinks that an individual who is not interested in politics for nature, traditional way of news narrative too complicated or obscure, and soft news to emotions and people's interests is outstanding, has attracted the audience for entertainment orientation, for the audience to accept political information is in the process of entertainment with a result, are incidental to the by-products, so accept political information and the cost is minimal, he called the framework of "cheap". Through data analysis of several diplomatic events (the Lebanese crisis, terrorism, war in former Yugoslavia) and several domestic events in the United States, he found that soft news media successfully used cheap frameworks to reach audiences seeking entertainment news in diplomatic crises and other events. In the past, foreign policy was in the hands of a few political elites, but now, to some extent, soft news "democratizes" foreign policy and makes it known to the general public. Therefore, these political elites must communicate with the public on foreign and other relevant policies.

Baume collaborated with another author, Jamison, to expand on the original idea. They argue that the "quality" of a piece of journalism depends on its ability to enable citizens to decide which candidate best suits their preferences. They found that individuals with no political interest who watch talk shows every day are more likely to be influenced by the shows to vote for candidates who adequately represent their self-described preferences than individuals who also have no political interest but do not watch talk shows. In other words, "soft news" improves the ability of at least some voters to

vote. Of course, for citizens who are interested in politics, "soft news" has much less impact. The table is:

Table 1

The character of journalism	The character of citizenship	
	A weak political consciousness	A strong political consciousness
hard news	small impact	moderate increase
soft news	Increase dramatically	small impact

Although Baum noticed the influence of entertaining political programs on people's political orientation, he did not pay attention to the role of non-political entertainment programs. This is because when people get in touch with the media, they may either directly accept the political information from the media or indirectly accept the political content through the intermediary of entertainment programs. Hyman affirms the role of entertaining programs in the media. He divides the mass media into two categories: serious political content and non-serious or popular non-political content. Among them, he believes that popular non-political content is very important for political content. One is the role of fillers, filling in other gaps left by political programming. Second, it acts as a buffer between the audience and the political world, so as to avoid people's aversion to politics by absorbing too much political content. Political content can bring a man back to reality, make the citizen accept his responsibilities, or make him pay attention to reality, but it can also cause him to be too anxious about reality and escape. On the one hand, the buffer provided by non-political content will make him interested in the media and thus accept the political information, while on the other hand, his reaction to the political information will not be extreme. About this point, Chafee etc. through the survey also proved this point. They examined the relationship between mass media use, political knowledge, and campaign behavior in 1968. The study involved 1,291 public and parochial school students in five Wisconsin cities, conducted in May and November, respectively, and 639 seventh graders in May and eighth graders in November. 652 students in Grade 10 in May and Grade 11 in November. Two surveys were conducted in May and November. The results showed that the mass media played an important role in the knowledge of politics. The students came into contact with the mass media because of its entertainment programs, so they did not necessarily consciously come into contact with the political information propagated by the mass media.

Hyman and Chaffee etc. limit entertainment programs to the role of intermediary, but ignore the phenomenon that some entertainment programs can directly influence the political trend of the public, the most obvious is the impact of some violent programs on people's aggressive behavior. Anderson etc. explored the influence of music with violent lyrics on people's aggressive thoughts and emotions. By comparing non-violent music to non-violent music, they found that music with violent lyrics did have an effect on people's social orientation. The effects were both short-term and long-term: in the short term, exposure to music with violent lyrics quickly increased aggressive feelings and thoughts, rather than catharsis, as many psychologists have assumed. In the long

run, direct and indirect effects can be distinguished. The direct influence lies in the development of people's aggressive personality; indirect influence is reflected in social interaction, verbal abuse, and fist and foot threats, resulting in the deterioration of interpersonal relations. The deteriorating social environment, on the other hand, affects the development of people's long-term hostility, thus further influencing their personality. Anderson also collaborated with Dill to talk about the relationship between video games and aggression. They found that, in both the long and short term, graphic violent video games were positively associated with aggressive and delinquent behavior, especially among people who were predisposed to be aggressive. This was also true of men, who generally have a more hostile view of the world than women.

Adorno has also demonstrated through film and television plots that entertaining content can directly influence people's political orientation. He believes that the realistic effects of television and movies make people tend to take what happens in movies and television for reality. When watching movies and TV, people are unable to use their own thinking, and the result of giving up their own thinking is to agree with the views stated in the movies, so as to achieve the purpose of defending the status quo. For example, a lot of movies and TV plays often have such a plot: a young woman teacher, the salary is very low, but because of various reasons, the school deducted a lot, so she is often in a state of hunger. But she still has an upbeat attitude and a good sense of humor. She often sets up tricks to get her acquaintances to invite her to dinner, but each time it fails. The story line seems to show the audience that when you have a sense of humor, when you are kind, responsive and charming, you don't have to work hard to earn a salary for food and clothing, and it teaches people to be comfortable with humiliation. For example, movies and TV series often have such a plot: a sensitive and strong man overpower an immature and dangerous woman. What such films and TV plays sell to the audience is the denigration of individual independence. The evil of the heroine princess is that she wants to be herself, and she wants to be "moral" and "docile", just like a horse is tamed. Adorno's analysis of the plot points out that in fact, the evil is not a person, but the whole system. Through movies and TV shows, very serious ideas are disrupted and everything is made saleable and entertaining. Just like the plots in TV and movies, when people are often satisfied with the fate of the hero in an abusive way, they also learn to endure the abuse of the whole system, thus giving up their appeal to the system.

The Factors That Affect the Function of Mass Media

The role of mass media in political socialization depends on the following three aspects: First, information source. Second, the form of communication. Third, the audience itself. Information sources mainly reflect that different mass media will have different influences on people's political orientation. Hibbing and Theiss-Morse explore this issue using the influence of the mass media on public perceptions of Congress as an example. They found that different types of mass media did not make fundamental differences in people's political perceptions, but did have different effects on people's

emotional responses. Voters who rely on electronic media, especially radio, for their news tend to have more dubious feelings about Congress than those who rely on print. Of course, no matter where that audience gets their political information, the longer they are exposed to the news, the more they become emotionally negative about Congress, especially the more politically naive voters. So they argue that, at least when it comes to Congress, the media can elicit emotional responses, but not necessarily affect the way people think.

Druckman also discusses the influence of television and radio on people's political orientation. The experiment was based on the first debate between Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy in 1960. The subjects of the experiment were 171 people, mostly young people, who did not know the debate. They were randomly assigned to either watch videos of the debates between the two candidates, or to listen only to the two debates. This experiment tested the following hypotheses: first, all else being equal, television viewers were more likely to judge candidates using personality criteria than audience-only listeners. The second is that, all else being equal, television viewers learn more about politics from their eyes as well as their ears, so they learn more than their audio-only listeners. Third, all else being equal, highly experienced individuals learn more than non-experienced individuals in any medium. Fourth, all else being equal, those who have no experience will learn more from television and audio, while the difference in media forms has little or no effect on those who have experience. From this, he concludes, the television format primes people to rely on individual perceptions of the candidates, which ultimately affects the overall evaluation of the candidates, and television images did play an important role in the first Kennedy-Nixon debate.

The form of communication is mainly reflected in the unilateral communication or bilateral communication. Dalton Etc. argues that the mass media's influence on people's political trend lies in the following two factors: one is the information provided by the mass media, such as is unilateral transmission (simple spread to a political parties, or political idea tendentious contents) or two-sided spread (not limited to a party or a point of view, spread the content of the different political tendency). The second is the audience itself. They cited Vallone Etc. such as "hostile media phenomenon" to illustrate the problem. Through the study on the election of 1980, Vallone Etc. found that most Americans believe that media coverage of the candidates is fair, but when voters if feel the media reports are biased, they will bring up the media to provide information as opposed to what they prefer candidates. The above viewpoint can be summarized as unilateral communication easily leads to hostile media phenomenon.

The role of mass media in political socialization is also restricted by the audience. Generally speaking, the reception and interpretation of information have social background, and individuals receive and interpret information according to their own social position. His feelings and current social background influence the influence of the media on him. Specifically, the age of the audience, the original political views and other factors. Media use varies with age. Roberts believes that the role of media has a lot to do with age. Sixth

graders are not yet able to understand more about politics, and to accept competition from both parties. Therefore, it is necessary to develop cognition and accumulate political experience before the media can have an impact on the individual's political attitude and knowledge. That is to say, before children have reached the appropriate level of understanding of politics, it is a matter of casting pearls before swine. This is mainly embodied in the childhood, the image of thinking has considerable development, but for the abstract thinking is still in its infancy, so for some politicians they tend to know, but for the political system and political ideas still don't understand, so the effect of the mass media to promote these aspects for children often is not big. Owen and Dennis' research also confirms this. They found that the mass media had little effect on political tolerance among minors. In contrast, the mass media have an impact on adult politics. Jennings and Niemi gave a general description of the relationship between media use and age. The use of the media increases with the increase in education. Media use is intermittent in elementary school, routine in secondary school, and then continues to rise into adulthood. There is a reverse trend, a slow decline, in the use of media by college-level people.

People have different political views and different reactions to what is propagated by the mass media. Eveland and Shah found in their research on the phenomenon of hostile media that the phenomenon of hostile media not only depends on the form of communication, but also depends on the original political views: the phenomenon of hostile media is more prominent among people with the same views and after in-depth discussion; The audience's own opinions are linked to an ideology: those who adhere to an ideology are more biased than those who are neutral.

In addition to age and pre-existing political views, people's social class, race and region also have an impact on the use of mass media. Byrne explores the relationship between media use and socioeconomic status, race, and residence. He finds that children who get their political information primarily from television (over print) news tend to support the government and feel that it is effective. These children come from black, low socioeconomic status and rural areas.

Conclusion

To sum up, it can be seen that mass media plays a decisive role in political socialization. It should be noted that most of the above conclusions are drawn in the Western cultural context, and some conclusions are not entirely suitable for China's national conditions. Therefore, on the one hand, domestic scholars and the government should pay attention to it; On the other hand, the academic community should further explore the mechanism of mass media in political socialization.

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