

Political **SOCIALIZATION** leads to your political **IDEOLOGY**

[Crash Course: Political Ideology \(8:46\)](#)

Political socialization is a lifelong process by which people form their ideas about politics and acquire political values. The family, educational system, peer groups, and the mass media all play a role. While family and school are important early in life, what our peers think and what we read in the newspaper and see on television have more influence on our political attitudes as adults.

Family

Our first political ideas are shaped within the family. Parents seldom "talk politics" with their young children directly, but casual remarks made around the dinner table or while helping with homework can have an impact. Family tradition is particularly a factor in party identification, as indicated by the phrases lifelong Republican and lifelong Democrat. The family may be losing its power as an agent of socialization, however, as institutions take over more of child care and parents perform less of it.

Schools

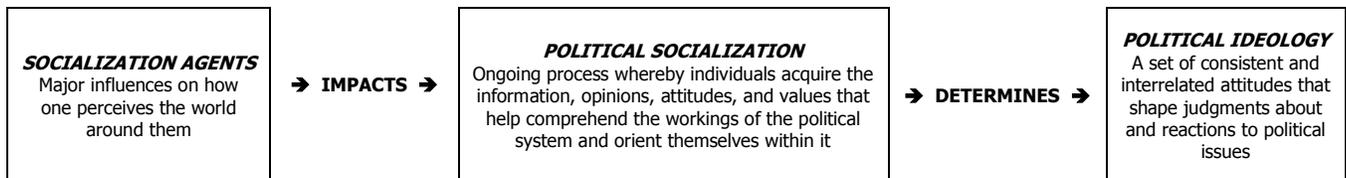
Children are introduced to elections and voting when they choose class officers, and the more sophisticated elections in high school and college teach the rudiments of campaigning. Political facts are learned through courses in American history and government, and schools, at their best, encourage students to critically examine government institutions. Schools themselves are involved in politics; issues such as curriculum reform, funding, and government support for private schools often spark a debate that involves students, teachers, parents, and the larger community.

Peer groups

Although peer pressure certainly affects teenagers' lifestyles, it is less evident in developing their political values. Exceptions are issues that directly affect them, such as the Vietnam War during the 1960s. Later, if peers are defined in terms of occupation, then the group does exert an influence on how its members think politically. For example, professionals such as teachers or bankers often have similar political opinions, particularly on matters related to their careers.

Mass media

Much of our political information comes from the mass media: newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and the Internet. The amount of time the average American family watches TV makes it the dominant information source, particularly with the expansion of 24-hour all-news cable channels. Not only does television help shape public opinion by providing news and analysis, but its entertainment programming addresses important contemporary issues that are in the political arena, such as drug use, abortion, and crime. The growth of the Internet is also significant; not only do essentially all-news outlets have their own Web sites, but online bloggers present a broad range of political opinion, information, and analysis.



***Your political socialization will generally determine your political ideology.
Your political ideology will generally determine your political party affiliation.***

Political IDEOLOGY leads to your political PARTY affiliation

A **political ideology** is a consistent set of beliefs and values that shape a person’s views. A political ideology is a set of beliefs about politics and public policy that creates the structure for looking at government and public policy. Political ideologies can change over time. Differences in ideology generally occur in the arena of political, economic, and social issues. In U.S. politics, ideologies generally are thought to fall into two opposite camps: liberal and conservative. While there are general guidelines for determining the nature of liberalism and conservatism, the differences between the two are not always obvious.

LIBERALS	CONSERVATIVES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally believe in governmental action to achieve equal opportunity and equality for all, and that it is the duty of the government to reduce community issues and to protect civil liberties and individual and human rights. • Also believe the role of the government should be to guarantee that no one is in need. • Liberal policies generally emphasize the need for the government to solve people's problems. • Liberals are often referred to as being on the LEFT when put into a political spectrum. • Democrats are often viewed as more liberal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally believe in personal responsibility, limited government, free markets, individual liberty, traditional American values and a strong national defense. • Also believe the role of government should be to provide people the freedom necessary to pursue their own goals. • Conservative policies generally emphasize empowerment of the individual to solve problems. • Conservatives are often referred to as being on the RIGHT when put into a political spectrum. • Republicans are often viewed as more conservative.

Individuals may have political beliefs that are a combination of liberalism and conservatism. Most commonly they may divide their opinions about economic and social issues. For example, an economically liberal, socially conservative person might believe in government support for health and welfare, but may oppose gay rights and/or equal opportunity programs for ethnic/racial minorities.

